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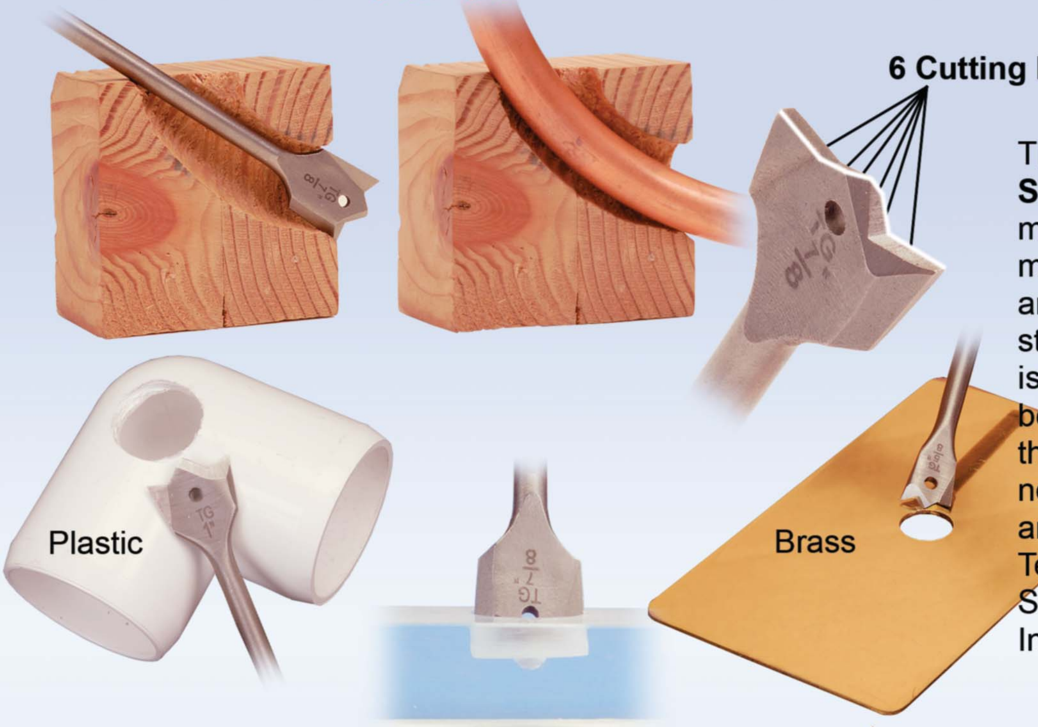

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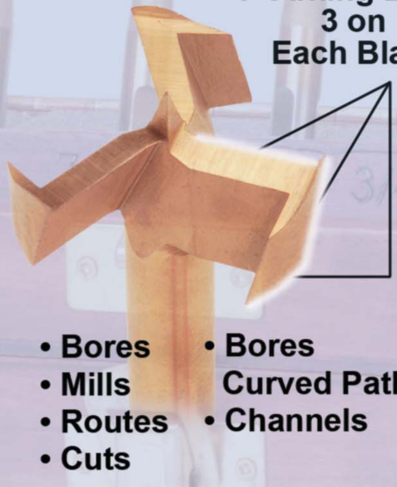

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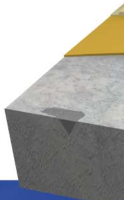

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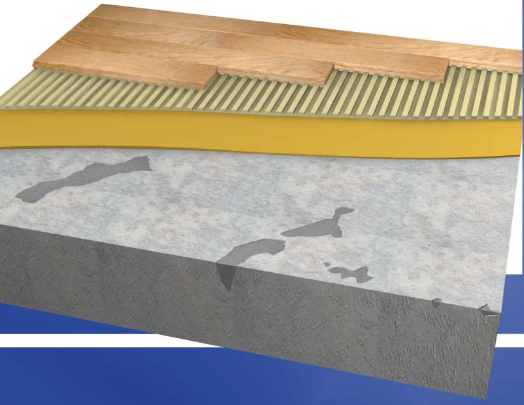

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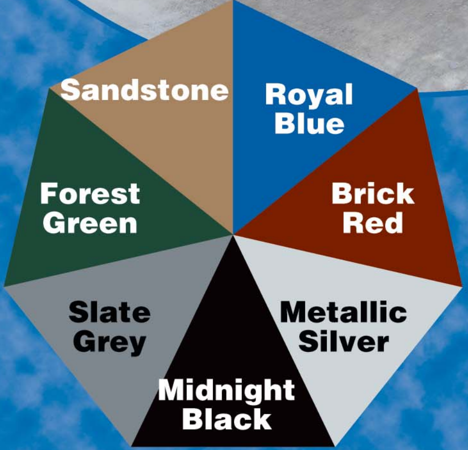
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LETTER From The Editor-In-Chief

The *EHT* staff stays immersed in home-improvement news every day, and still, there are so many new products and materials hitting the market each year that it's tough to keep track of all the innovations. It's nice to have an organization like PATH to do the legwork for us. PATH stands for the Partnership for Advancing Technology in Housing, a program supported by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Recently, PATH scanned the industry for the technologies with the most promise for making our existing homes more durable, stronger and more resource efficient. The criteria was based on factors such as energy efficiency, environmental performance and affordability. Listed below are the Top 3 winners of the PATH prize, so the next time you're chatting up your neighbors during a backyard barbecue, you can impress them with your solid grasp of current events and cutting-edge building technologies.

Air Sealing—PATH touts the benefits of insulation alternatives to conventional fiberglass batts or rolls. One method: insulation that is blown or foamed through a membrane. When adding insulation to existing homes, it's common to blow insulation material into enclosed wall, floor and roof cavities. The same technique can also be used in new construction by covering an open wall cavity tightly with a membrane (nylon netting or polyethylene) fastened to the framing. Fiberglass, cellulose or mineral wool can then be blown in as the insulation material.

Ventilation Control System—Whether crawlspace ventilation is necessary (or even detrimental) is a hotly debated topic among building experts. Especially in humid climates, ventilating the crawlspace can add mold-breeding moisture to the area. A new mechanical ventilator called Smartvent provides a compromise: It measures the moisture content of outdoor and crawlspace air, and only provides ventilation when the outdoor air is drier than the crawlspace air. This system prevents unwanted moisture from being added to the crawlspace.

HVAC Sizing—The Air Conditioning Contractors of America offers guidelines for sizing HVAC equipment, and your contractor should use them. The specific guidelines explain how to calculate heat loss from the building through walls and ceilings, leaky ductwork, infiltration through windows, doors and other penetrations, as well as heat gain into the building from sunlight, people, lights, appliances, doors, etc. By properly sizing HVAC equipment using the guidelines rather than rules of thumb, smaller systems can often be specified, which reduces the cost.

Sound like good ideas? I think so, and these are just three of PATH's Top 10 technologies. To see the rest, visit www.extremehowto.com.

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Q&A

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Q: *Can you explain the basics of how a geothermal heat system works?*

A: Geothermal—or "Ground Source"—heat pumps (GSHPs) are electrically powered systems that tap the stored energy of the earth. These systems use the earth's relatively constant temperature to provide heating, cooling and hot water for homes and commercial buildings. GSHPs can be categorized as having closed or open loops, and those loops can be installed in three ways: horizontally, vertically, or in a pond/lake. The type chosen depends on the available land area, and the soil and rock type at the installation site. These factors help determine the most economical choice for installation of the ground loop. For closed-loop systems, water or an antifreeze solution is circulated through plastic pipes buried beneath the earth's surface. During the winter, the fluid collects heat from the earth and carries it through the system and into the building. During the summer, the system reverses itself to cool the building by pulling heat from the building, carrying it through the system and placing it in the ground. This process creates free hot water in the summer and delivers substantial hot water savings in the winter. Open-loop systems operate on the same principle as closed-loop systems and can be installed where an adequate supply of suitable water is available and open discharge is feasible. The benefits are similar to the closed-loop system. The GSHP is one of the most efficient residential heating and cooling systems available today, with heating efficiencies 50 to 70 percent higher than other heating systems, and cooling efficiencies 20 to 40 percent higher than available air conditioners.
—Source: The International Ground Source Heat Pump Association

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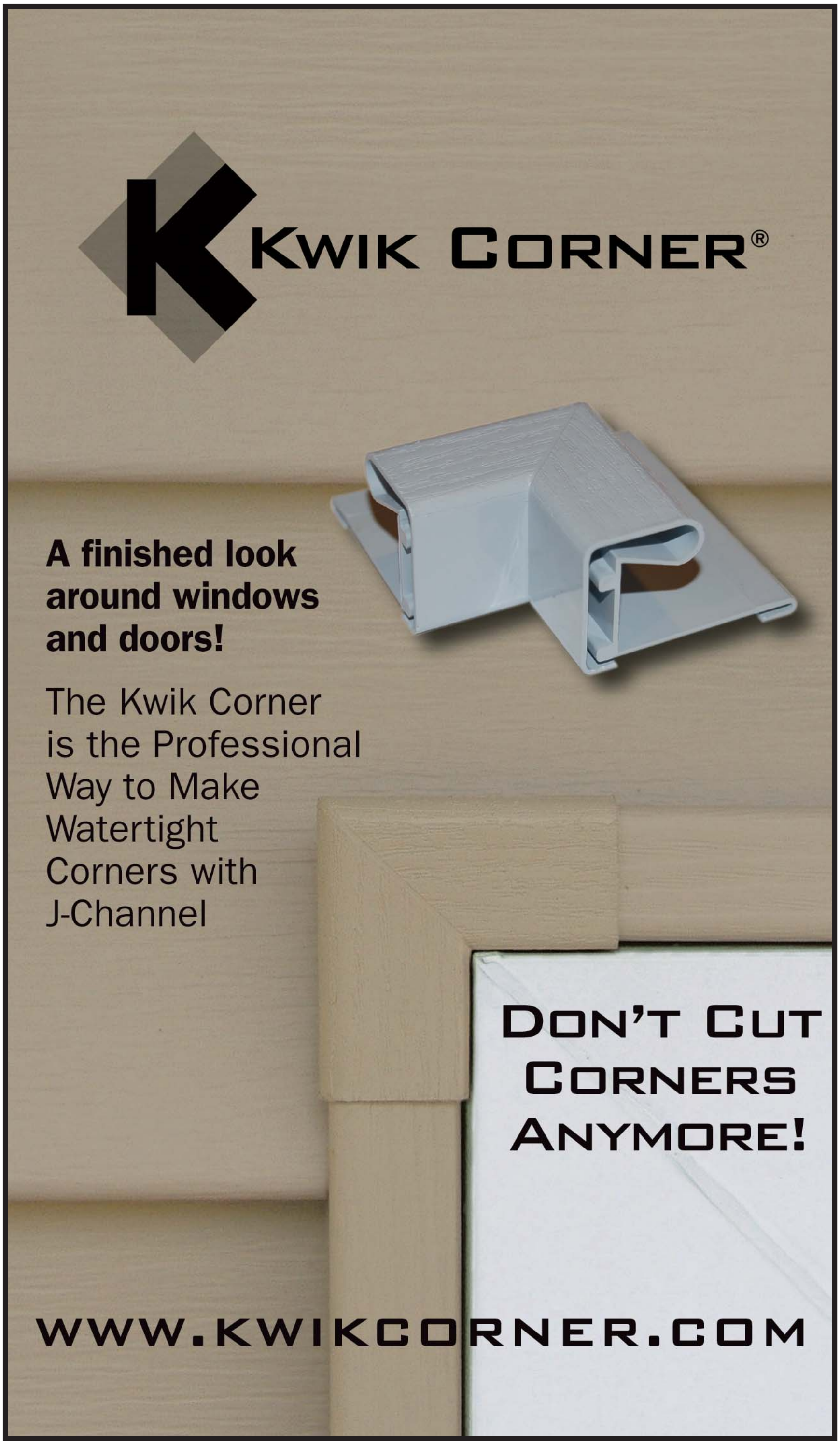
Q. *What's the difference between Cat 5 and Cat 5E wiring?*

A. Both Category 5 and Cat 5E cable are very versatile and make excellent choices for wiring your house for media and entertainment systems. Both types come in several colors to help you identify which cable came from which source. Cat 5 cable consists of four pairs of cable and is used for computer networks, phone, audio and video. The difference is that Cat 5E has four pairs of twisted wires, which makes it less susceptible to interference from outside sources.



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Tighter Miters

Choosing and Using Today's Miter Saws

Consider new features and cutting capacities when selecting your next saw.

By Matt Weber

From deck-building to intricate finish carpentry, one of the most useful electric saws is a miter saw. If you've ever used a slow-going miter box and handsaw combo, then you probably get my drift. In fact, a miter saw is the single most important tool a finish carpenter will use, providing the critical angles to build inside and outside corners on virtually any project. If you're new to miter saws, this article will take a look at some basic features and what they're used for, as well as highlight a few models that are currently on store shelves.

WEIGHING THE OPTIONS

Before purchasing a saw, first decide what applications you'll be undertaking. Then factor in storage and portability. And of course, work within your budget. For example, a professional-grade sliding compound miter saw will likely handle any chore you throw at it, and do so day after day for years to come. However, such a beast can be very expensive ($700!), weigh more than 70 pounds and take up a lot of space. And I've never encountered a sliding compound saw that's easy to carry. For a contractor or serious DIY'er who uses a miter saw often, such an investment makes sense. But, for the occasional trim-out around the home, a smaller consumer model should suffice.

In fact, professional trim contractors don't always ascribe to the "bigger is better" theory. Blade size typically ranges from 7-1/4 to 12 inches, and the smaller saws are much lighter and thus easier to carry and store. This is a big advantage when schlepping the tool from jobsite to jobsite. Naturally, the trade-off for a smaller size is work capacity. The larger the blade, the larger the material it can cut.

THE RIGHT TYPE

Miter saws also vary in the type of cuts they can make. A standard miter saw—often called a "chopsaw"—cuts stock with a downward chopping action. You can make standard crosscuts or turn the saw to cut a miter, usually anywhere from 0 to just over 50 degrees. This style works fine for "flat" work, such as making door casing or picture frames.

Compound miter saws are more versatile. Not only can you turn the saw for a miter, but you can tilt the blade to cut a bevel. A compound miter saw can cut a bevel on any miter angle simultaneously. This dual cutting action is critical when working with crown moulding, base moulding, etc. To further complicate matters, let's divide compound saws into two categories: single bevel and dual bevel. The single bevel saw can flip to one side for making compound cuts. A dual bevel can flip to either the left or the right. The dual-bevel saw

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provides the widest range of angles. The advantage of the dual bevel is that you can cut trim stock with the bevel and miter oriented the same way it will be installed, which can save you both time and some mental acrobatics.

However, the most cutting capacity comes from the sliding compound miter saw. Instead of cutting with a chopping action, these saws slide out from the saw's base on rails. The user activates the blade and then slides it back through the stock, cutting in reverse. Many new models are belt-driven, which keeps the motor conveniently out of the way when cutting. Sliding compound miter saws usually cut up to 5-1/4-inch base or crown in position (with the moulding angled against the fence and base, which represents the wall and ceiling of the house). For anything bigger than that, you'll have to tip the blade at a bevel and cut a compound miter. Not only can the sliding saws conquer all the trimwork you can dish out, but they have the capacity to cut large dimensional lumber, making them ideal for building decks, stairs and fences.

A 12" sliding compound miter saw, such as the Bosch 5412L, has plenty of cutting capacity for dimensional lumber.

USING THE SAW

When preparing to use a miter saw, take note of the super-sharp, toothy blade that spins at speeds up to 5,400 RPM. Suffice it to say that safety should be a top priority when operating the saw. Always wear safety glasses and clear away any wood scraps or debris from the saw area.

First, adjust the head to the designated angle. The miter angles are printed on the base of the saw, and you generally slide the saw handle and its indicator to the designated degree. Screw in the handle to tighten the saw into position. The bevel-adjustment device is often located on the rear of the saw, and operates in much the same manner with a bolt/handle to tighten to the correct position and demarcated measurements to guide the angle setting. Some of the newer saws offer bevel locks on the front of the saw, so the user doesn't have to

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Ridgid's MS1290LZ features a large saw base with the capacity for 61-degree miter cuts and 47-degree bevels.

reach to the rear. Another neat modern feature is a backlit digital display that shows the exact angle setting for both miters and bevels, which gives you much better visibility and confidence that the blade is set to the right position.

When you're ready to cut, stand in a stable position and use one hand to hold the material tightly against the fence and downward against the table. Many new saws include special clamps that help firmly secure the stock in position to cut. Always hold the workpiece portion of the stock, not the short cut-off piece. Use the other hand to operate the saw, and steadily push the blade down into the stock. Always release the trigger and let the blade stop completely before raising the handle from the workpiece. This will keep the spinning saw teeth from chattering against the surface of the material as it is pulled up from the cut, which can mar your work. If stopping the cutting operation halfway, start re-cutting after you pull the saw head back into its original start position.

If using a sliding saw, pull the blade forward as far as it will go before plunging it into the wood. Pushing the cut allows the rotational force of the saw to work with you. Never pull the blade toward you through the stock—it's dangerous and will result in a lousy cut.

A miter saw with an accurate setting means there's no real need to mark a cutline the entire width of the stock. A simple, penciled "V" mark, with its point indicating the cut-off point is all you need, and will speed up the process when making multiple cuts.

For precision cutting, it may help to start the cut ahead of the "V" mark, gradually shaving away material until reaching the cut-off point. Some of today's saws even provide a precise laser sight-line that indicates exactly where the cut will be made.

I used to cut picture frames as an evening job during college, and in doing so I found that some moulding profiles tended to tilt ever-so-slightly forward beneath the pressure of my hand. This caused the miter to be slightly uneven in the back of the cut, resulting in a small gap that I'd have to fill with putty. To minimize this, I found it helpful to use a small wooden block, pushing it with the ball of my hand against the bottom of the moulding, securing it against the

Hitachi's new C12LSH miter saw features a backlit digital display of the miter and bevel angles.

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DIGITAL DISPLAY
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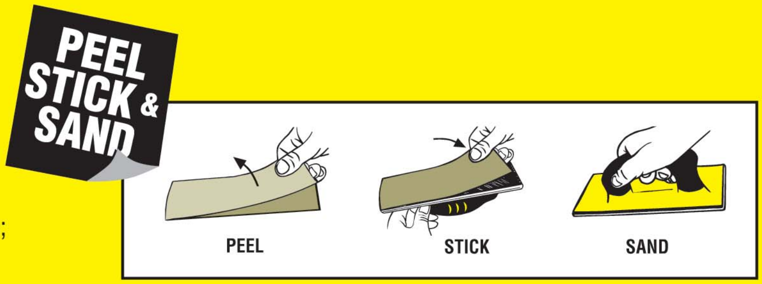
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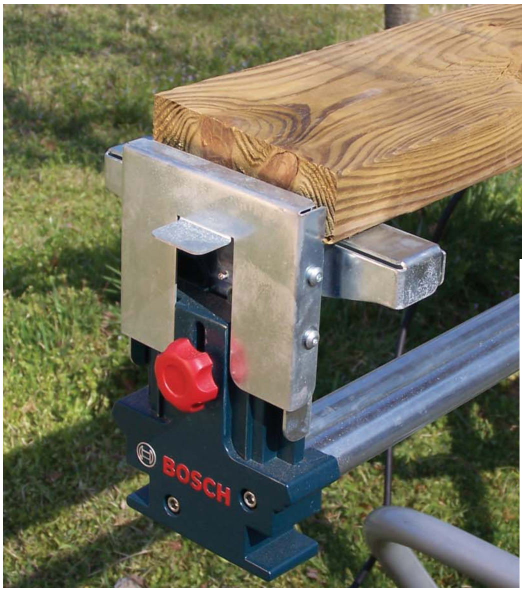

For repetitive cutting, using stop blocks will speed up production. The Bosch Gravity Rise stand includes integrated stop blocks and also folds into a portable cart.

fence as my fingers pressed the stock downward. This helped prevent that slight tilting.

For multiple cuts of the same length, such as studs, balusters, pickets, etc., you'll find it helpful to secure stop blocks at the end of the saw's table or stand. These hold the end of the material in a uniform position while you make the repeated cuts. Many manufactured miter-saw stands feature adjustable stops and "wings," or outfeed supports, that extend to accommodate long pieces of material. Or, a makeshift stand can be made of a sturdy piece of plywood clamped to sawhorses on a level surface. Just make sure the wood stock is evenly supported so the piece does not bow. You can also make your own stop blocks.

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CURRENT MODELS

Bosch 5412L 12” Slide Compound Miter Saw

The last couple of months I’ve had the pleasure of using the Bosch 5412L sliding compound miter saw, and it offers a little bit of everything. Accurate right out of the box, the saw’s 12-inch blade, powerful motor (3 horsepower), and beefy dual slide rail make quick work of cutting everything from quarter-round to fence posts. It can crosscut boards up to 4-1/2 inches thick by 12 inches long. When set at a 45-degree miter, it cuts up to 4 inches thick by 8-1/2 inches long. At a 45-degree bevel, the cut capacity is 2-3/4 inches by 12 inches. The 5412L also features a four-position handle, up-front adjustments of all bevel and miter settings, an easy-to-lock work clamp, two sliding fences, dust-collection bag, and sliding extensions that support boards up to 40 inches long. The motor is equipped with an electric brake that stops the blade within a split second of releasing the trigger. The saw’s arbor-mounted laser provides a bright, thin laser line that is visible throughout the cut, so you can perfectly match the cutline to the blade kerf.

Because I do a lot of work away from home, a really sweet accessory to the Bosch saw is the Bosch Gravity Rise miter saw stand, which folds into a pneumatic-wheeled carrying cart when not in use. This makes toting the saw from site to site much easier on the back. www.boschtools.com

Ridgid MS1290LZ 12” Slide Compound Miter Saw

The first thing that struck me about Ridgid’s new slide miter was its large, extra stable deck with a cool flip-up miter adjustment handle. Rotating the handle’s thumbwheel away or toward the table engages or disengages

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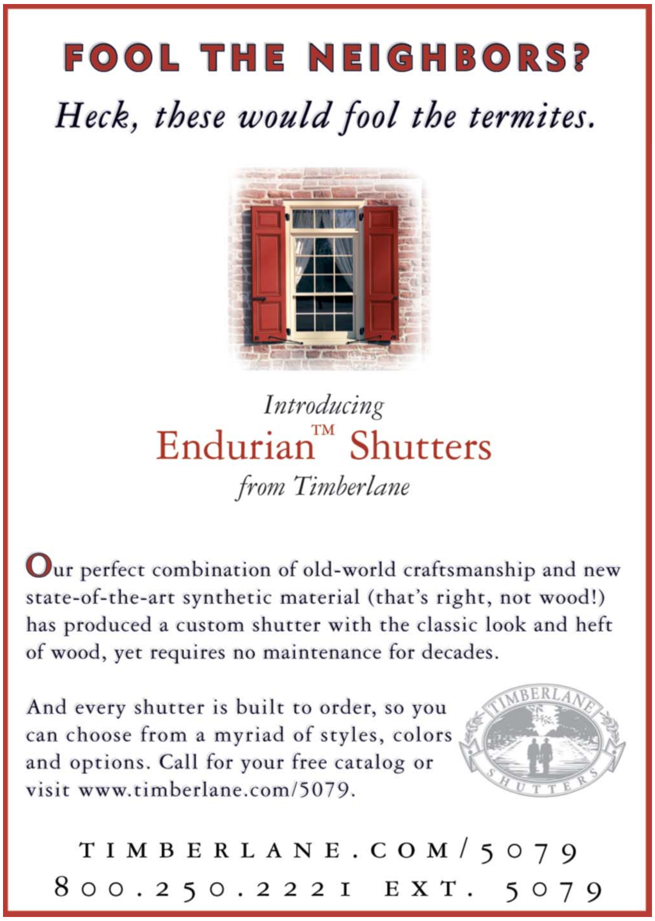

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the positive stops, in case you're setting angles very close to the detents (i.e., 44.5 degrees next to the 45-degree detent). Plus, the large deck means the saw can pivot left and right for cuts up to a best-in-class 61 degrees. You can also tilt the saw head from 0 to 47 degrees on each side. The laser blade locator is spot-on, the 2-1/2-horsepower motor has a good start-up, and even the hold-down clamp is solidly constructed and easy to use. A depth-stop feature allows you to cut rabbets or grooves. As far as dust collection, I prefer the cosmetic appeal of Ridgid's metal-framed dust bag when compared to the flimsy socks included with most competing saws. Overall, this is a solidly built, pro-grade saw that prices less than its major competitors—at time of publication, the Ridgid model ran just under $500, compared to the Bosch 5412L at around $675. www.ridgid.com

RIDGID
RIDGID
RIDGID

Ryobi TSS100L 10" Slide Compound Miter Saw

Ryobi's new sliding saw has a 13-amp motor with plenty of power for practically any homeowner application. This single-bevel saw includes Ryobi's Exactline laser alignment feature and an electric brake that stops the blade in seconds. All the prerequisites are here too: carbide-tipped blade, dust-collection bag, a spindle lock for easy blade changes, and easy-to-read scales on both the miter scale and miter fence. However, the saw base is smaller, thus less sturdy than most pro-grade models. And, although the saw includes right and left table extensions, the extensions are nowhere near as beefy as a professional-grade model. That's only to say that the Ryobi isn't a quality saw; but you can expect a lot more plastic components than metal as compared to a pro-grade model. The TSS100L is a consumer model, which means it wasn't engineered to be used on the job every day. However, for DIY'ers who occasionally tackle tough projects that would require a sliding miter saw, the new Ryobi presents a great buy—only $200—a third of the price of some leading pro-grade competitors. At the time of publication, this saw was available only in Canada, with plans for a stateside launch within 6 months. www.ryobitools.com

RYOBI
RYOBI

Hitachi 12" Slide Compound Miter Saw

Hitachi's C12LSH compound miter saw not only features a laser marker but also a digital LCD display. The digital display of miter and bevel angles requires the unit to be trued to ensure accuracy, but once this important procedure has been done and the saw fences are checked, you will be on your way to cutting with a saw that is, well, on the cutting edge. The digital angle finder worked fine for the samples we cut, and this feature should be very useful when cutting crown moulding. The handle layout was comfortable, and the sliding action was everything I would expect from a saw in this price range (approximately $650). One of the less touted features of the Hitachi was the ability to operate the saw in tight quarters. Hitachi's rails do not require clearance behind the saw like other miter saws. Miter-cut ranges for the Hitachi C12LSH are 0-46 degrees to the left, 0-57 degrees to the right. Bevel range is 45 degrees for both left and right bevel. Our test saw was mounted on Hitachi's Universal Stand—a well-made addition to any Hitachi Saw. Table weight is 40 pounds, so it is built to professional standards also. The inclusion of a wheeled stand is almost a necessity for the combined unit that exceeds 100 pounds, and thankfully, the Hitachi Universal Stand has wheels. www.hitachipowertools.com

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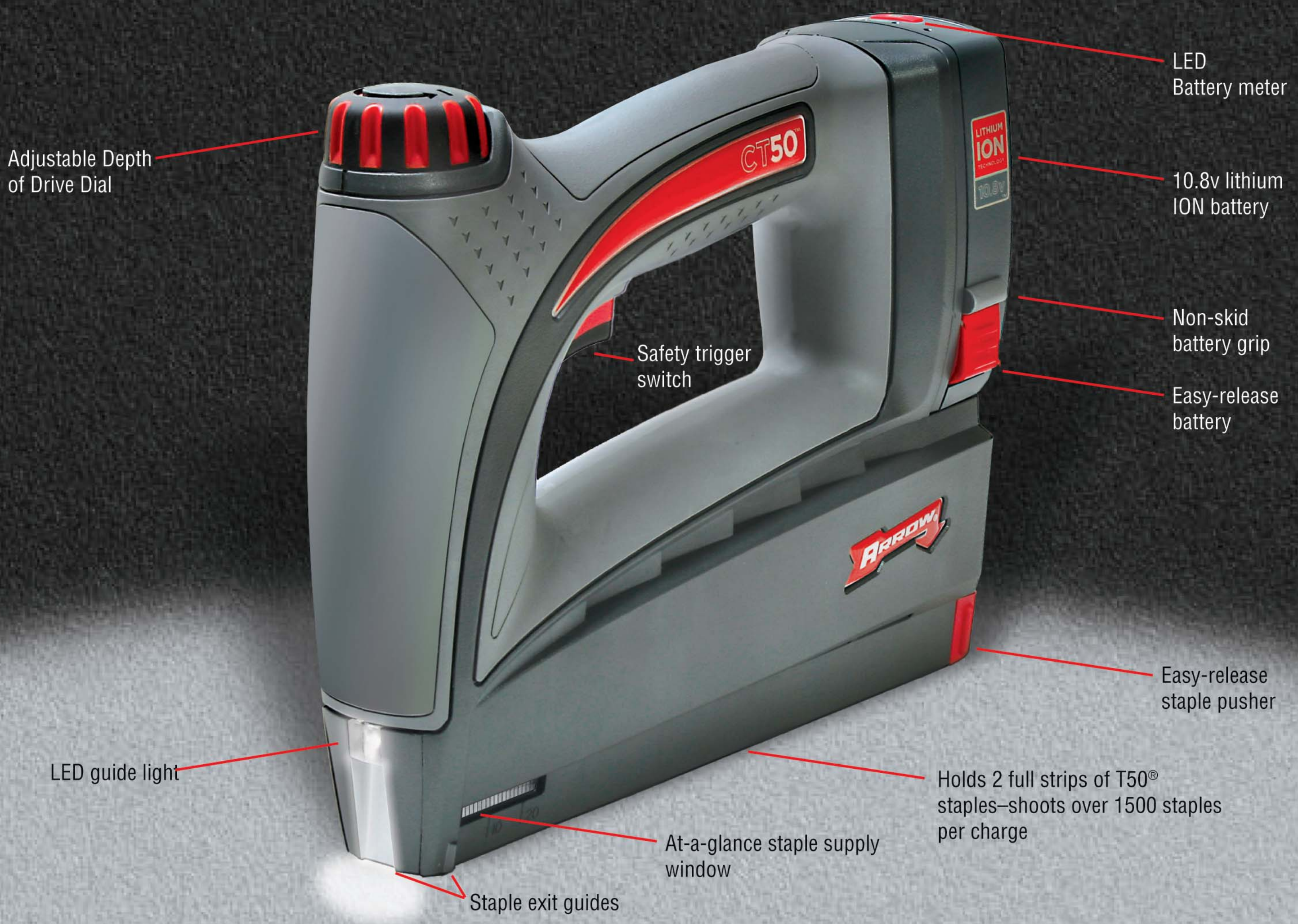
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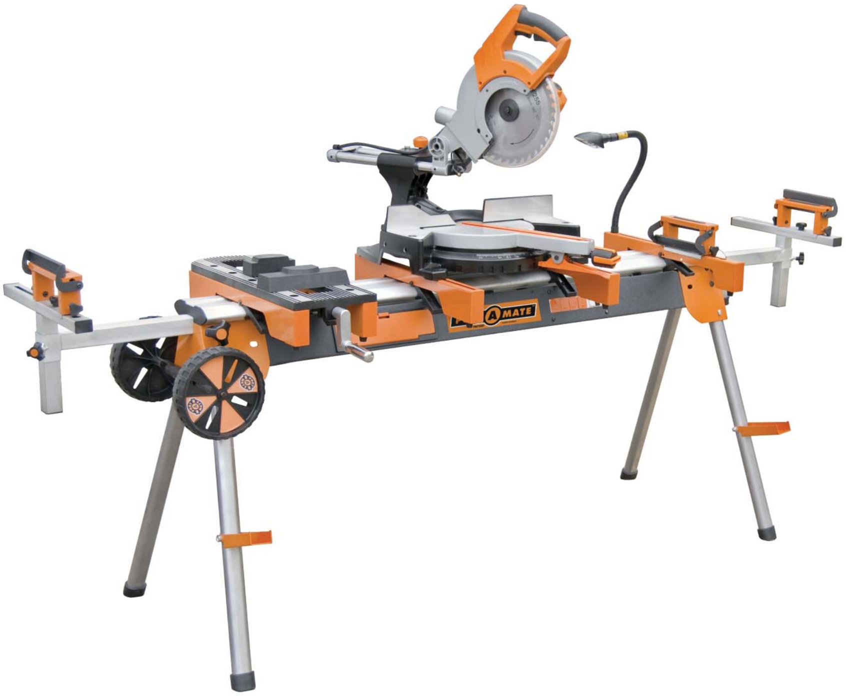

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ROCK SOLID

By Larry Walton

Installing Granite Countertops

Not many years ago we were marveling at marble vanity and granite kitchen countertops in those put-on-the-booties tour houses. Today the availability of quarried, dimensional stone has brought new meaning to hard surfaces in many more homes.

Although granite is tougher than marble, which is not common in American kitchens, it occurs naturally in a range of hardness. Most can still be scratched by knives and other kitchen utensils. Also, granite is porous and must be sealed to minimize staining and to keep it from becoming a bacteria-growing science experiment.

The big custom counter fabricators have stockpiles of quarried rock slabs, which they fashion with laser templates and computer-guided milling machines. Obviously you can't

A small sample of the counter material helps when making decisions about overhangs and transitions.

just whip out your woodworking tools and cut a chunk of rock for your next countertop, but there are some options available.

"You can buy $20,000 in tools to be set up like a caveman," according to one of my friends in the business. But he doesn't like to talk about the pre-cut and edged counters available, which is probably what you would install in your home.

I received a $6,200 bid for a custom installed countertop in our kitchen using mid-range stone. I can buy enough pre-bullnosed rock here in town for about $2,500, which leaves about $3,700 for tools and labor. However, the finished product depends a lot on kitchen design. Seam locations and limitations on shapes and sizes may dictate whether or not the counters should be custom-fabricated and installed.

In general, dimensional stone gets quarried to either a 2- or 3-centimeter thickness. Three-centimeter tends to be more expensive but it has better structural strength, and the edge can be shaped without additional help to give it depth.

The 2-cm stone is the thickness that is more economical and tends to be readily available for the non-professional installer with pre-finished edges. The edges on 2-cm counters receive a build-down treatment to give them the look of added bulk. Sometimes the edge is mitered, which gives it a square look and hides the seam well. More often, however, a strip of granite is cut and glued to the underside of the edge, and then a heavy-duty router cuts it into a bull-nose shape. The edge seam may be visible to the critical eye.

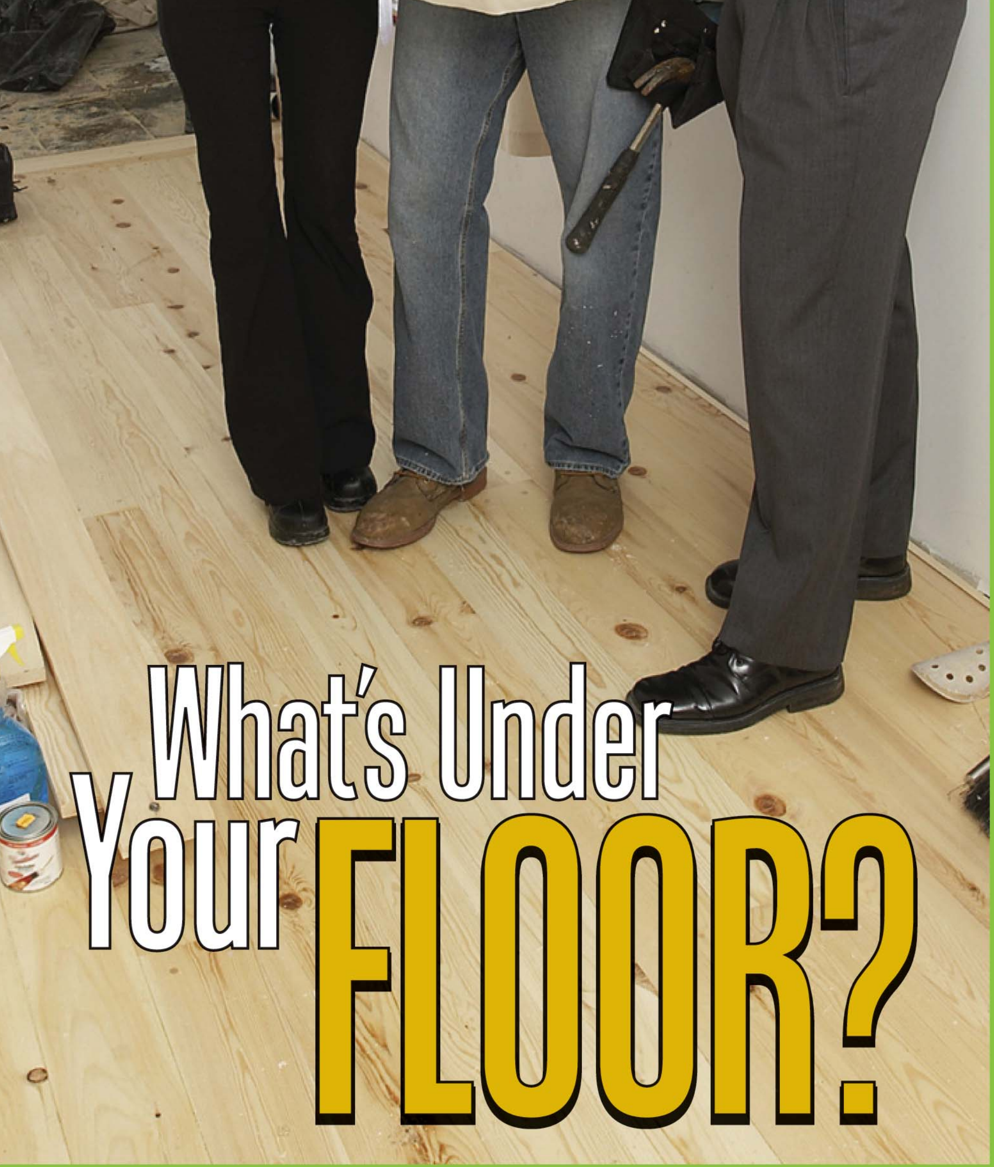
These pre-fab counters also have a single-thickness, polished edge on the back side, which can be cut along the length of the counter and used as a matching backsplash.

The 2-cm counters need to be supported with plywood subdecks for added structural strength. Overhangs are usually supported with corbles or cantilevered steel rods.

Cabinets should be very flat, level, well anchored and sturdy.

Carefully label the location of templates.

After hot-gluing template pieces together, an additional bead of hot glue applied in a caulking-like bead helps reinforce the connection.



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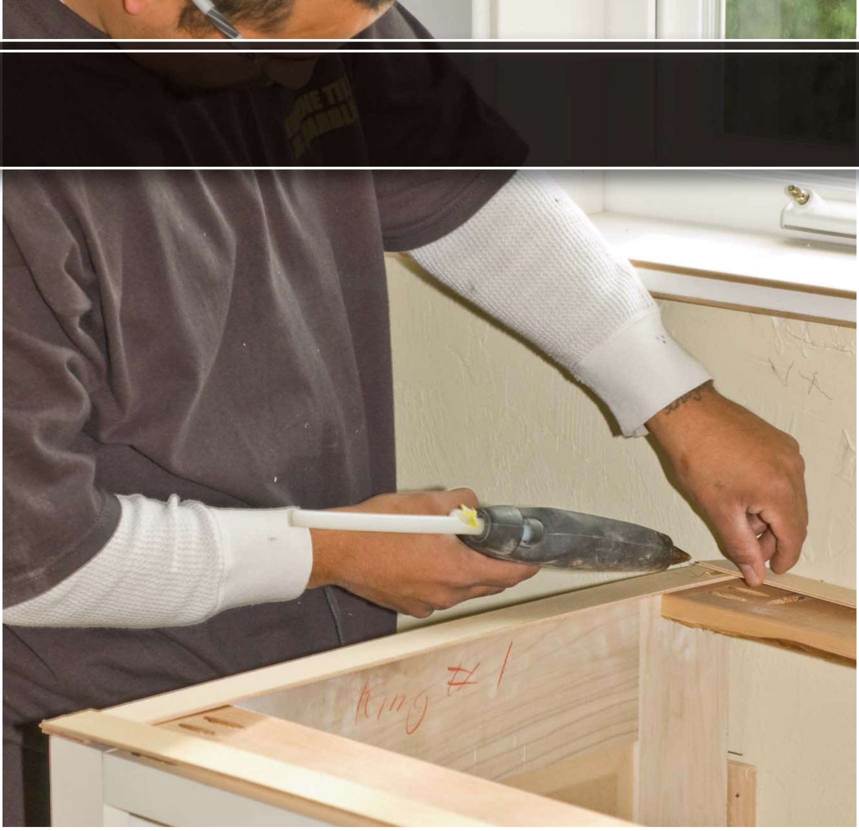
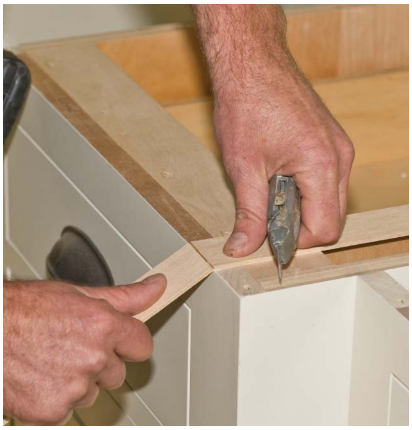
A template method known as "sticks" traces the perimeter of the cabinet with thin plywood strips.



Score the thin plywood with a utility knife and snap it off.



A grinder head smoothes and shapes the cut made by a cutting wheel.

Specialty tools like this stone router are among the least expensive of the tools found at a stone fabrication shop.

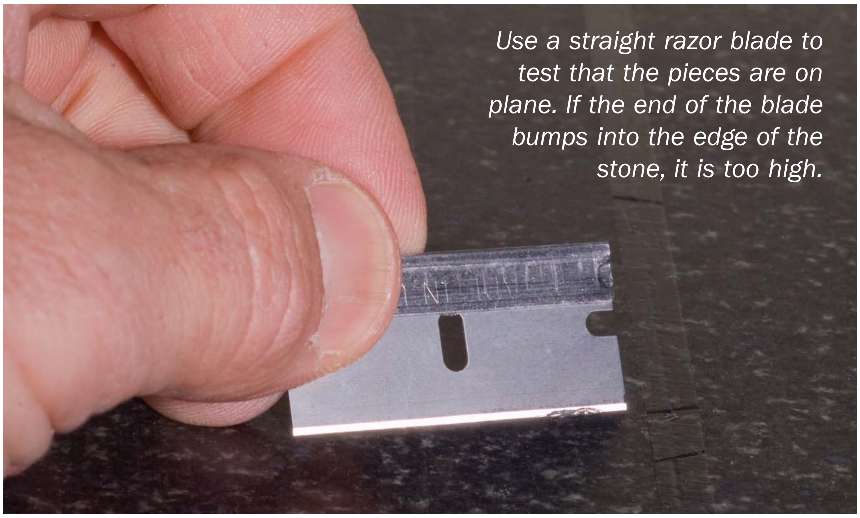
It should be obvious to the most casual observer that big pieces of rock are heavy.

Regardless of the grade of granite you buy for your project, it's still pretty expensive material. That's why many installers make templates of wood strips or heavy paper to eliminate measuring mistakes. Wood templates have the advantage of holding up well in a wet saw environment, but you a can use roofing felt pieced together with duct tape as well.

Make sure you label your templates to indicate which is the front and the back edge, and where adjacent features in the kitchen are located.

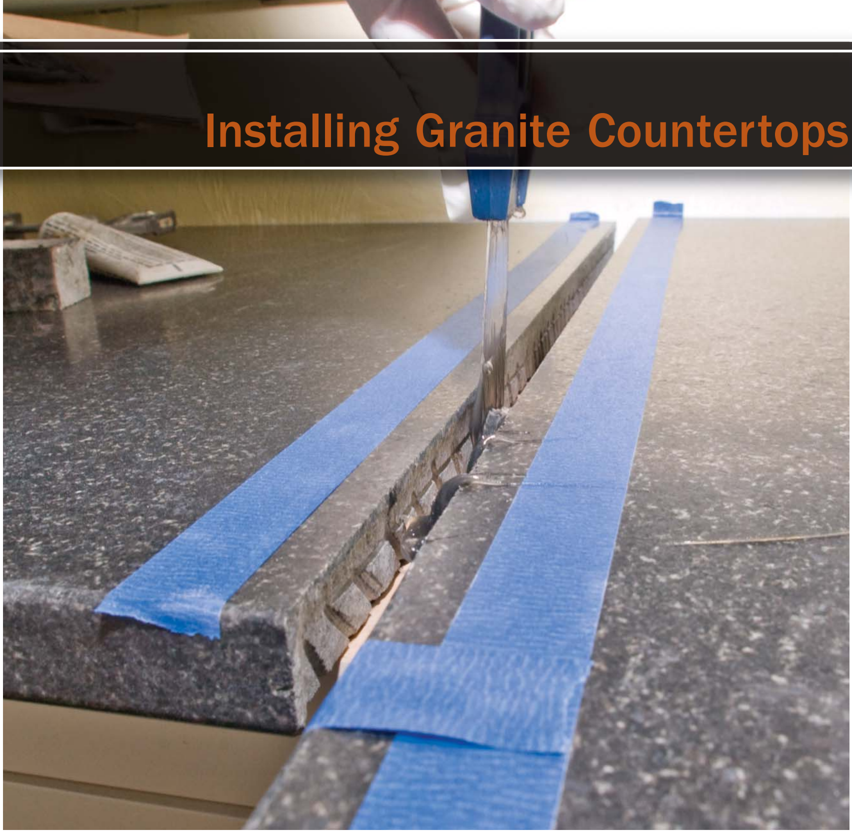
Sinks mounted under the counter are traditional for stone counters, but shaping and polishing the edge of the sink opening is a challenging task. You may wish to install a surface-mount sink instead.

Making seams in granite countertops is another big challenge. A two-part epoxy acts as both an



Use a straight razor blade to test that the pieces are on plane. If the end of the blade bumps into the edge of the stone, it is too high.

A two-part epoxy with counter-matching colorant can be mixed on a scrap of cardboard. With the countertop slabs in position, the epoxy is mixed and spread along the adjoining edges.



adhesive and filler. Whenever possible, seams should be made over well supported sections of cabinets. Cuts should be straight. It's a good idea to score the edges below the surface, so the epoxy can extend into the notches for increased sheer strength.

Do not make your seams with the idea of grinding and shaping them flat later. It is extremely difficult to match the factory polish of your stone. Attempts to grind and buff the surface usually result in a noticeable change in sheen giving the seam areas a dull appearance.

Dry-fit the pieces before mixing the color-matched epoxy, paying particular attention to shimming the pieces so they are flat on plane with each other. Place a strip of masking about 1/2 inch away from each edge of the seam.

Remove or tip the pieces enough to place construction adhesive between the cabinet and countertop, and reposition the pieces leaving a 1-inch gap at the seam.

After the pieces are joined, excess epoxy is removed to the level of the tape.

Take your time determining the best locations for seams.

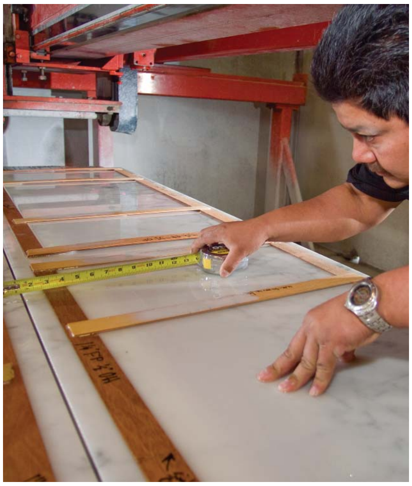
NAME THAT ROCK

Dead geologists must be rolling over beneath their grave stones at what the quarried countertop industry calls "granite." So don't be shocked if a geologist at your next house party tells you that your counter is actually monzonite (or syenite, or gabbro, or anorthosite, or gneiss). Just tell him that he wasn't actually invited, but he's welcome to set his beer on the feldspar-bearing rock, while he dishes up some more free food.

Mix the epoxy, spread epoxy onto the edges along the seam and press the pieces together. Scrape excess epoxy off the top using the masking tape as a form to maintain proper epoxy depth.

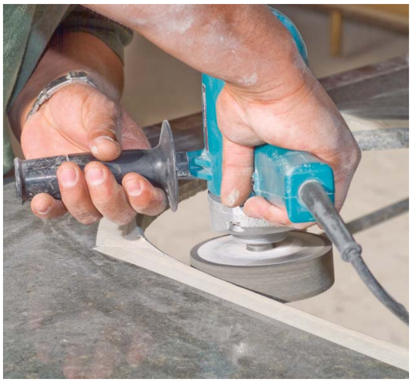
Remove the tape. Clamp and shim the pieces as needed to get them flat. Use a straight razor blade to test that the pieces are on plane. If the edge of the blade bumps into the edge of the stone, it is too high.

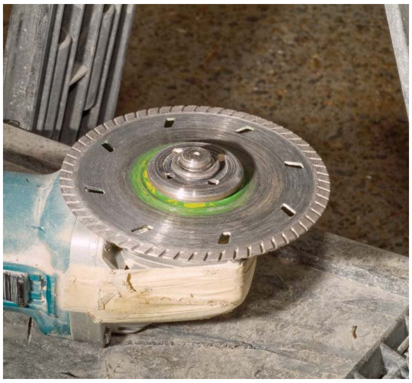
After the epoxy has set up, shave the excess epoxy off the surface with the razor blade. Apply a recommended sealer to the surface. Fit and place the backsplash as designed. **EHT**



Wood-strip templates hold their shape in the wet conditions of a large stone saw.

A grinding stone is used to smooth and shape a sink opening.

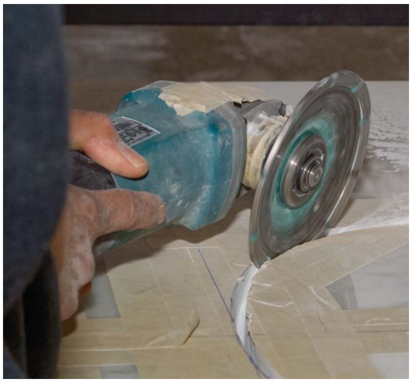




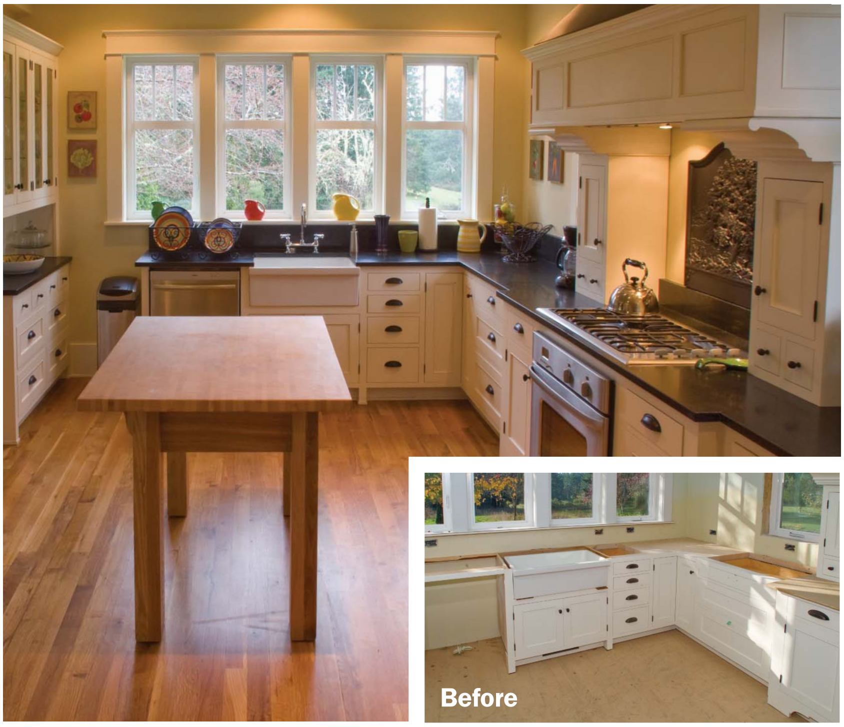
An angle grinder and diamond cut-off wheel are the primary tools of the stone counter do-it-yourselfer.

An automated edge shaping machine cuts and polishes a bull nose.

A contour diamond blade is used to cut out curves like this sink opening.



Dry cutting granite produces a lot of fine dust. Take precautions to protect your lungs and your property.



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The Reinvention of a 100-year-old Bedroom

Bedroom Build-Out

By Mark Clement and Theresa Coleman

A bedroom remodel is fairly fundamental. Most everyone has done something to the bedroom to make it their own, whether it's as simple as a new paint job and hanging a new light fixture, or as complex as blowing out a closet or wall to make a master suite of an entire floor.

For me, tackling this master bedroom project meant creating a space that makes sense for living in this century—a handy feature for a house built in 1905. Old houses are tough enough to work on, but this old bird was (I'd like to say "lovingly remodeled," but that would be deceitful) was remuddled some 75 years later. And by "remuddled" I mean *That 70's Show* style hit this house like an out-of-control freight train, complete with accents of wood paneling and pink shag carpet throughout.

Upgrading this bedroom to meet such high-brow standards as un-cracked plaster walls and ceilings, along with suitable clothes storage (there was no closet in this bad boy), required blowing out a neighboring room's closet to add square-footage. I also upgraded all the electrical from the haphazard knob-and-tube to 21st Century specs. All this was to reach the ultimate goal of creating a remodel-free sanctuary while the rest of the house undergoes its growing pains on its way to a second life in modernity.

TEARING BACK TO A BLANK SLATE

This master bedroom is a gut-job. Nothing is worth keeping.

The plaster has long-since over-served its duty and has been trying to retire to the floor—without a lick of encouragement from a wrecking bar I might add—for at least a decade. The windows refuse to stay open without special assistance from a book or scrap of lumber. The electrical knob-and-tube is like an active volcano waiting to light. The trim looks like it was cut during a blind-folded dare. And the insulation is like believing in a Santa Claus: I like to think that it exists, but it doesn't. The walls are just simple, sturdy ol' terra cotta block with plaster-on-lath. Not a high R-value here.

And you don't have to know anything about remodeling to catch this fastball: I just don't think pink works for an adult's bedroom. Once we settled on a realistic scope of work and a proper budget, I couldn't wait to start smashing out the mangy pink walls.

GAME PLAN

But, planning precedes smashing, despite the spike in my blood pressure when I got clearance to have at it.

You may be thinking, why doesn't he just sheet the entire room in drywall? Wouldn't that save a whole pile of time and money? No and yes.

Time. It would actually be more of a hassle to work around the current state of affairs. Laminating drywall on top of bad plaster would trap substandard wiring under a new finish and leave the HVAC system sucking wind like it was breathing through a straw. Not only would it have been *not right*, it would have been seriously *wrong*—and not safe.

Money. It does cost more out-of-pocket to do things the right way, but the amount of time saved from not spending hours jimmy-ing around with seriously PITA carpentry (you figure out that acronym) like tiny jamb extensions and/or re-hanging the door combined with bringing out the brittle, cloth-jacketed wires to the new drywall plane, I will actually save money in labor cost.

The biggest benefit to stripping the room back to block: The room can be insulated and a proper tie-in can be made to the HVAC system. That's a big bonus for a house that's never had any—and the project is ultimately cheaper to own over the long haul. 'Nuf said.

NEW GEAR

Tearing out plaster isn't something I do every day, but it's hardly new to me either. With all remodeling projects, there's always some nuance behind the sheathing. And I always expect a little surprise that some previous tradesman thoughtfully (or, more

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likely, thoughtlessly) left behind. To make haste on this project I reached for a few new tools to help speed up tear-down.

Ruggedly ready. I've never found any reason to wear anything that's been purchased in the last decade during a demo job—until now. Don't get me wrong. When I'm walking around my customers' houses, I try to keep a workmanlike, yet professional, appearance. So, I decided to try out a button-down shirt from RIGGS Workwear for demo, and I'm glad I did. Demo is sweat-factory work. Wearing the long-sleeve RIGGS layer over a short-sleeve layer kept me cool (okay, cooler) and as free of debris as possible during total rip-out. And the cotton fabric is rugged but not stiff, so I can move (www.RiggsWorkWear.com).

No matter what you decide to sheath your body in during demo jobs, it's important to remember to wear eye protection and gloves. You never know what might fling back at you while you are tearing the walls down. And get good dust masks while you're at it.

Ripped and wrecked. The other new tool on the project was a set of three Demo Dawg wrecking bars (www.DemoDawg.com). If you've used wrecking bars, you'll know that not all perform the same. The bars from Demo Dawg have sharp, wide and flat prying heads that are ideal for plunging behind trim or into plaster and lath, enabling the wide head to release a large swath of plaster for faster progress.

Bag it. Ever since I read a book about trash—*Gone Tomorrow, The Hidden Life of Garbage*—my first inclination is to use anything re-usable. It's not necessarily because of global warming, it's just that I don't like adding to the growing pile of

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waste on the planet. On this job I didn't have the option of renting a dumpster. Instead, I had to bag up the detritus and lug it out like Santa doing sidework. I suggest using DemoBags (www.DemoBags.com). They're re-usable, bulletproof, and—I like this—even when you have to dump them, they decay at a much faster rate (according to the company) than your basic black plastic deals. Sweet.

RIPPING AND STRIPPING

After I had the right work gear, the right tools, and a place to put all of the debris, it was time to start the fun part: Shredding the room back to block.

Starting with the walls and then moving to the ceiling, I ripped the decaying plaster to its final resting place inside the trash bags. The ceiling was a special case. It's the only place that had insulation in the house (rock wool packed the bays) so instead of taking it all down (and taking a shower in rock wool) I left the lath but took the plaster.

The best tool for the job was a simple, square edged garden spade. While perched on a rolling scaffold, I was able to delaminate the plaster from the lath with no damage—while saving the existing insulation.

All-in-all, I ended up hauling 3,000 pounds of material to the curb, where my local refuse collector kindly hauled it off in the weekly pick-up. I'm lucky, I know. (For those thinking I'm exaggerating about the weight, I spot-weighed a few bags along the way.)

The last step for demo was to rip up floor boards (there was no

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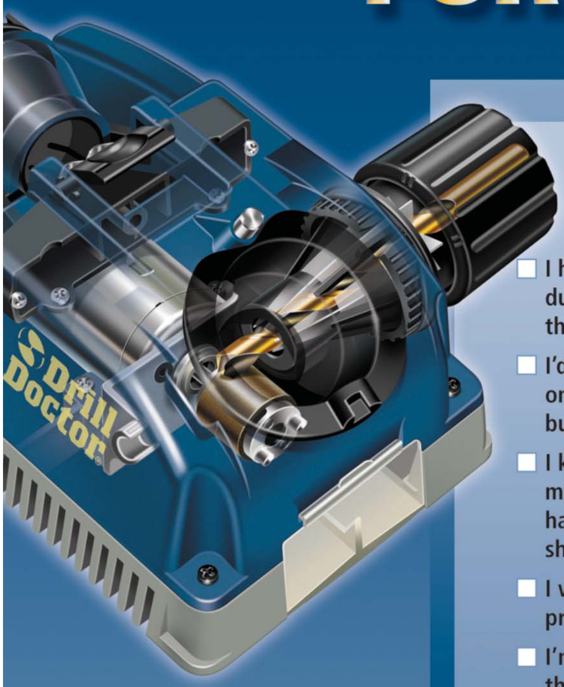

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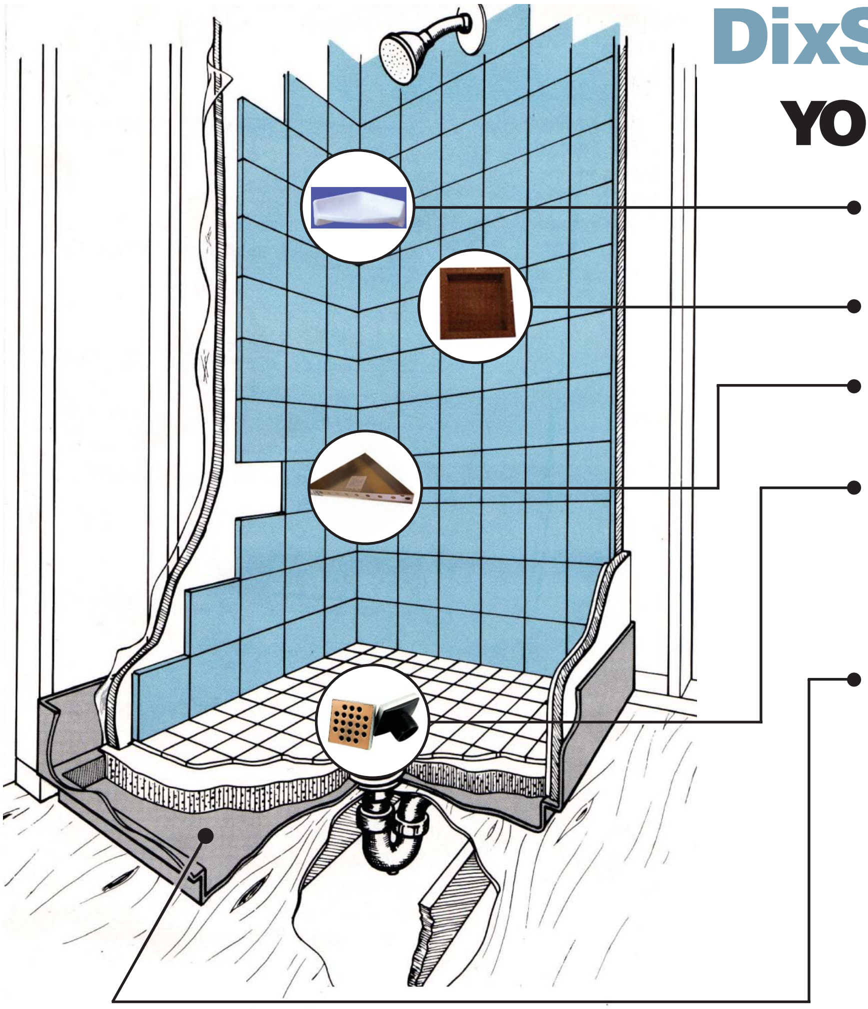

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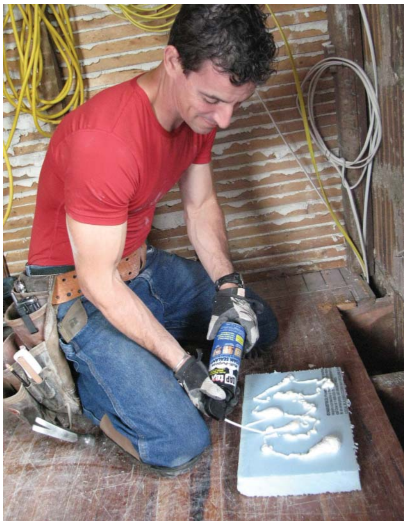
subfloor here) to gain access to the floor joist bays for insulation later on.

INSULATION, PART 1

Floor-joist Bays. Insulation wasn't a top priority when this house was built a century ago. And while it's much more talked about now, there's still a much-overlooked spot that is a source of heat loss and a cause of cold floors. I'm talking about floor-joist bays along a house's perimeter.

While it's possible to just pack the bays with R-30 fiberglass batts (Tip: It's smart to do this in a basement's joist bays to keep a first floor warmer; I install one batt vertically against the outside wall, then another installed horizontally 24 inches into the bay), instead I chose three layers of Dow R-11 rigid Styrofoam. This saved time, because I didn't have to remove very many floor boards. I could also adhere the rigid cubes to the block wall and then seal around them with DAP low-expanding foam. And where I had to sneak the chase through the existing floor system, I could put half a layer of foam (you can halve the pieces using a



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handsaw—I use a Stiletto brand for this; it's awesome) to get an R-5-ish panel. That'll help knock down cold air without sacrificing too many cubic inches of airflow. Then I stuffed the joist bay on the interior side of the chase. This really sealed up the joists nicely.

Along the wall running parallel with the joists, I was able to rip more sheets of Styrofoam into pieces I could wedge between a joist that was about an inch off the block. I then sealed off this area with Great Stuff spray foam. There'd be no way I could stuff fiberglass down in this gap, and if I sprayed it entirely with Great Stuff (which would have worked) it would have taken a long time and a zillion cans of goop.

Sound work. Between adjoining rooms, I ripped sheets of Styrofoam at full thickness to fit between the studs. I could have used sound deadening batts, but there were a couple of challenges: First, the bays were a full 2-by-3 so the batts (at 3-1/2 inches) would have been slightly overstuffed. Second, studs (like the floor joists) were randomly spaced so each panel had to be cut. Sawing through the rigid panels is a snap, so they went in quickly and snugly.

I was left with all kinds of cutoffs from the rigid foam, so I used them over windows and in other areas instead of batts. Nothing went to waste, which I like.

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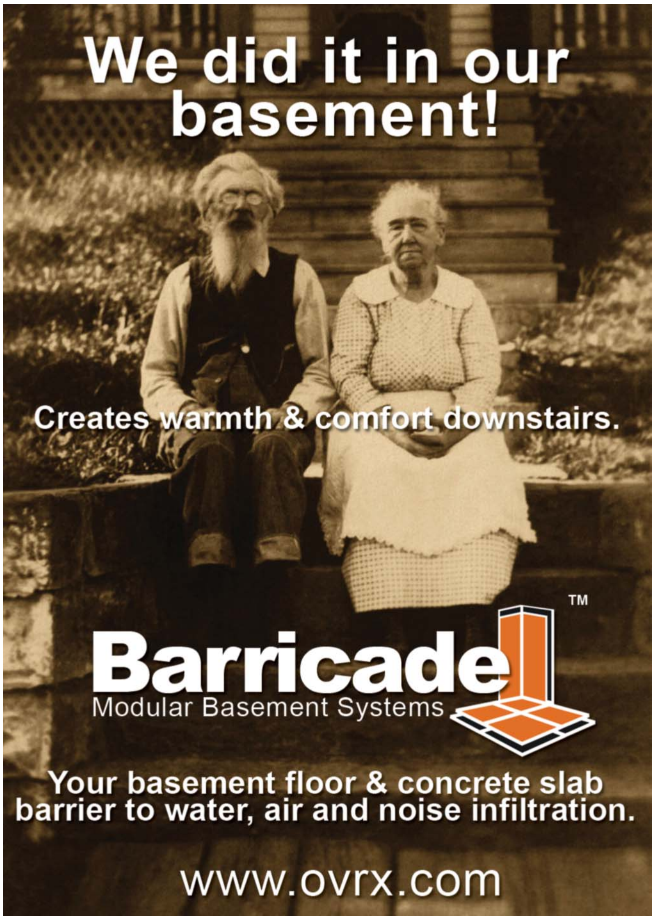

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FRAMING

In essence, I was building a new room from scratch, so I framed just as if I were building a new house by pulling all of my layout lines from one corner.

Framing was pretty straightforward. The only thing to point out is that instead of tripled-up framing in the corners to create a nailing surface for drywall, I use “chicken ladders”—blocking cut like ladder rungs—to create the nailing surface and a cavity I could insulate (wood is not a great insulator).

But, because I had to weave in an HVAC return chase through the existing floor joists (spaced randomly), I paid special attention to where the chase laid out and moved studs accordingly to save myself backpedaling later on.

Also, I had to be sure none of the new electrical ran through the planned HVAC chase, so I made sure to lay out all of these plans well ahead of time with my electrician.

ELECTRICAL ROUGH-IN

Scheduling is critical on every project. It’s hard to avoid surprises, but it’s also important to try to make a master schedule so work is completed when it makes sense, and is scheduled at a point when it’s easiest for each trade to complete their work. That’s why I felt lucky when my electrician was able to do the rough-in before I started full-bore insulation. And I know he appreciates that he could just go ahead and pull all the wires and place all the device boxes without having to wire around insulation. Not only would that have made him feel less pleased with me as a client, the hassle would jump up his hours, and my bill, too.

INSULATION, PART II

After the electrical was roughed-in, packing the bays with R-13 fiberglass batts was a snap.

Don’t squeeze me in. Insulation is supposed to be fluffy, not vacuum-sealed into the walls. If you cram it in, you’ll get lower thermal performance. It’s the air pockets inside the pink fluffy matter—not the pick fluffy stuff itself—that really does the work of trapping heat, and keeping your house at your desired temperature. Compressing the insulation chokes off layers of those little air pockets. To keep the insulation fluffy in these bedroom walls, I carefully notched it around electrical devices rather than simply stuffing the full batts around a box or around any blocking. For wires, it’s best to slice the

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insulation up the middle and wrap the wire (like a sandwich) rather than jam it behind—or in front of—the wire.

I reached for my hammer tacker to secure the paper ears on the batts of insulation to the surrounding framing. It's important not to move randomly around the batt, and to start at a fixed point when affixing the insulation. I like to start at the top and work my way down. This way the batt doesn't sag while I'm tacking it in place, preventing a possible gap between the top of the stud bay and bottom of the top plate.

DRYWALLING

I like to hang rock myself when possible and profitable. The main benefit is that I can control the amount of bulk material moving through a home while—hopefully—avoiding any possible damage to other finished spaces along the way.

Finishing the drywall is another story. While I'm pretty good at getting a nice smooth seamless-looking finish, my subs can do an impeccable job somewhere on the order of a thousand times faster and better than I can. And using subs doesn't hurt my bottom line at all. I'm freed-up to move other parts of my projects forward, so in the end, I actually save money on the job by working at high-efficiency.

WINDOWS

Insulating walls is great, but if the windows are leaking like sieves, you've still got huge energy problems and an investment into a Swiss cheese palace.

So, the last phase of tightening the building seal is replacing the two windows with new vinyl replacements. I've picked out a window with a Low-E coating and argon gas between the glass. Instead of bright white, I'm going for Simonton's new Driftwood color, which will give a nice contrast to the eventual high-gloss white trim around the windows. And while the windows will save energy costs throughout the year, they also have the neat upgrade not included in the originals—they can stay open without any special rigging. **EHT**

Mark Clement is a remodeler and author of The Carpenter's Notebook, *A Novel. www.TheCarpentersNotebook.com.*

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SHED SOME LIGHT

By Larry Walton

Wiring a Garden Shed

When is a shed a shed, and not a shop or a barn? Sometimes the answer to that question is a technical one and determines whether or not you need a building permit. Most of the time, however, it's up to you. Location, purpose and size of your outbuilding determine the fit and finish, but one thing I try to do if possible is get some lights in there.

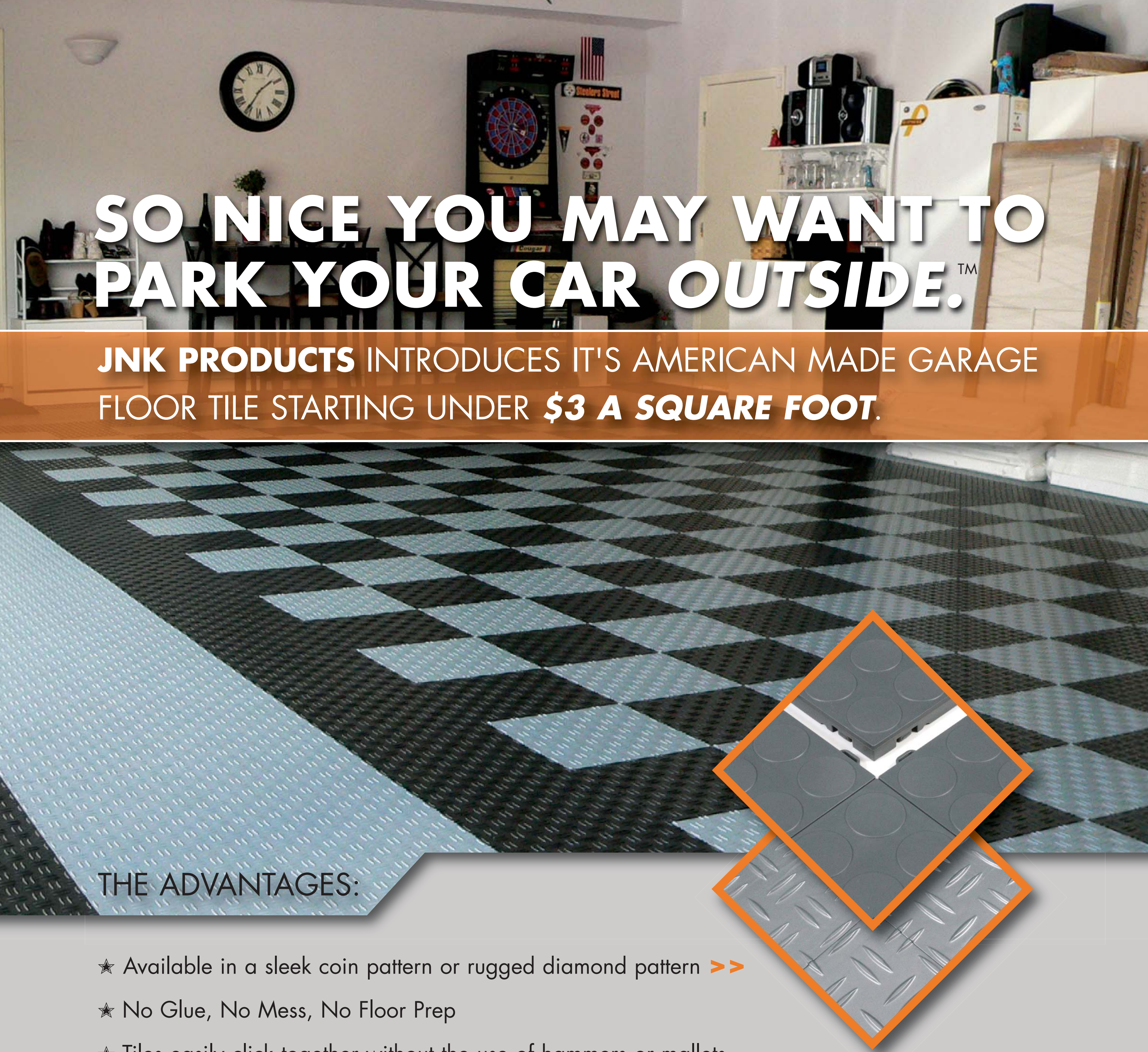
Some sheds need lights. Many of us leave for work when it's dark and get home when it's dark during those short days and long nights of winter. So if you're going to use a shed to store tools, toys or supplies, then you'll be using it in the dark for much of the year.

I've had my share of trips to sheds with a flashlight, so when we planned a new garden shed I started with looking for the best way to get some juice to the location. An outlet on the outside of the house provided a source for power, so we dug a ditch from that location to where we would build the shed.

Check your local codes, but the basic requirements are (1) adequate gauge wire and breaker, (2) GFCI protection on the circuit, and (3) special underground wire or conduit.

You can run your wire underground in sealed PVC conduit or you can use type UF underground cable, as long as the wire is protected with conduit wherever it is exposed.

We elected to us type UF and



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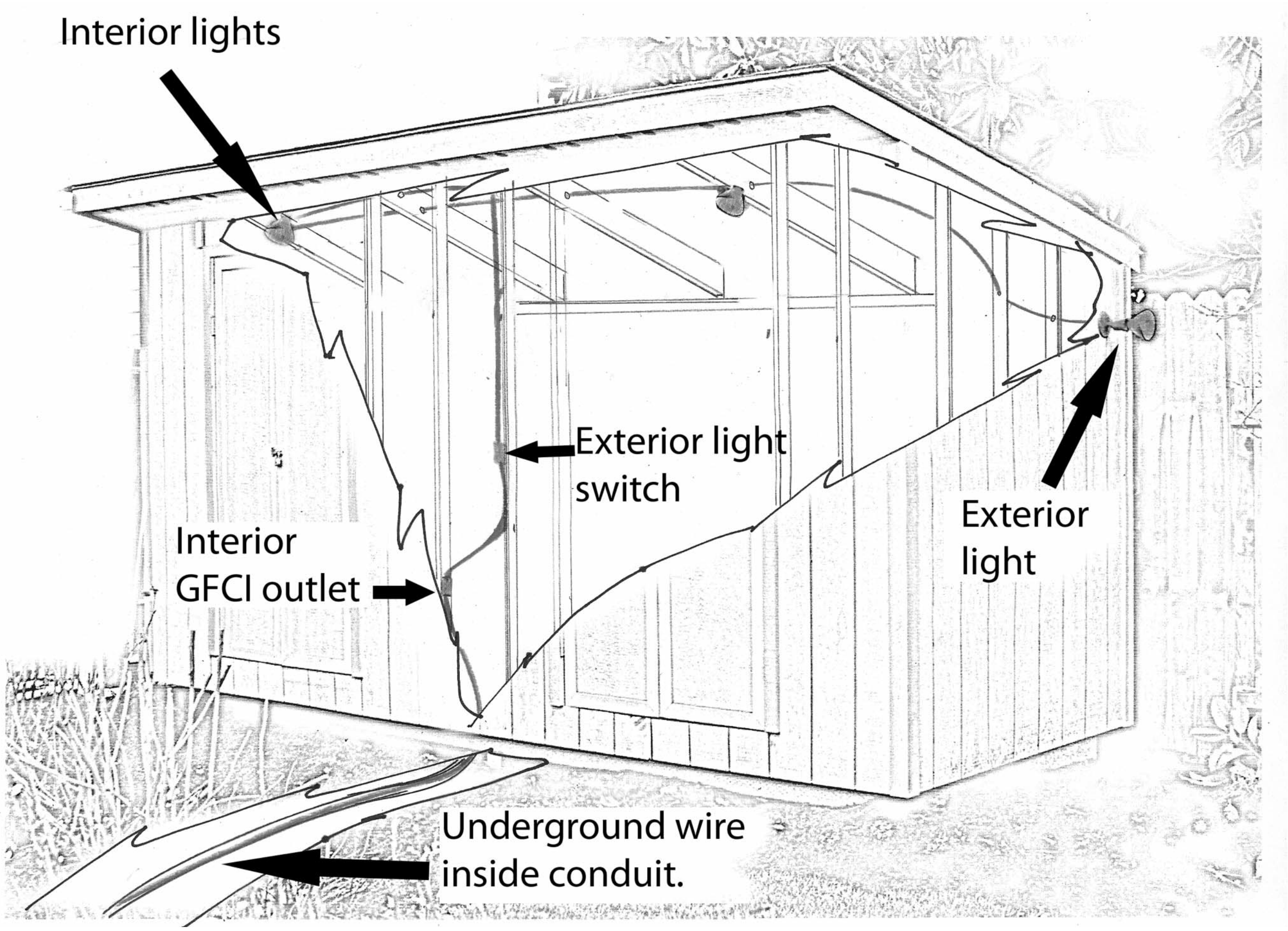

Interior lights
Exterior light switch
Interior GFCI outlet
Exterior light
Underground wire inside conduit.

PVC conduit. I figured the wire could use some extra protection in case I get the idea to build an alligator pit and forget that the shed wiring is there. However, the type UF cable we used was a pain in the butt for stripping the insulation to make j-box connections.

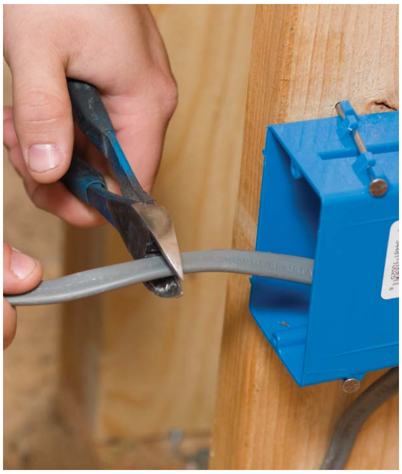
Here's how we got it done:

Once we knew where the shed was going to be located, we dug a trench from an existing exterior junction box (j-box) to the new outbuilding.

We ran PVC conduit to protect and route the wire underground, leaving enough extra length for us to decide where to place the first outlet to be installed in the shed.

We added extra pieces of conduit to protect the wire against puppy teeth between the ground and the shed floor. We then drilled a hole through the bottom plate of the shed framing and through the floor, and threaded the wire from outside into the shed.

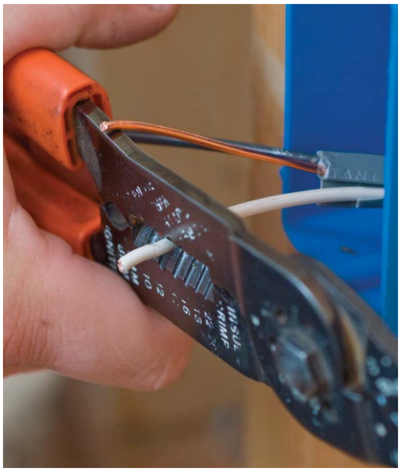
We set an outlet j-box about a hammer length off the floor. With the j-box elevation set, we attached the box to a stud using the supplied nails.



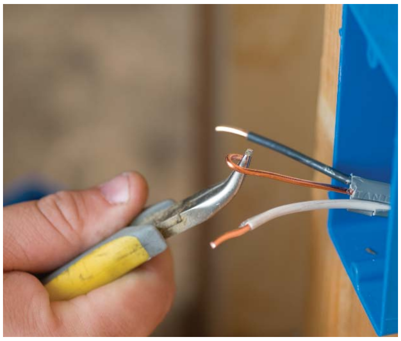
We snaked the wire through one of the openings in the j-box. We then secured the wire to the framing with a wire staple. Be sure to drive the staple in without damaging the insulation around the wire.

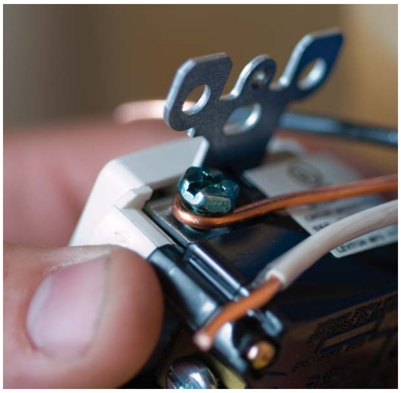
We tried several methods to strip back the outer shielding of this underground wire. The added challenge is because the outer insulation is not just a sleeve like regular romex, but fills all of the space around the individual 12-gauge wires as well. Be careful not to cut the inner insulation around the individual wires.

Wire strippers have gauge-specific notches so you can find what works for the wire you are using. Remove 1/2-inch of insulation from the wires to prepare for installing the outlet.



There are usually two ways of attaching wires to common household outlets: screws on the sides or holes in the back. The ground wire, however, is usually fastened only with a screw, which means you'll need to bend a small loop for connecting it. Needle-nose pliers work well for this task.

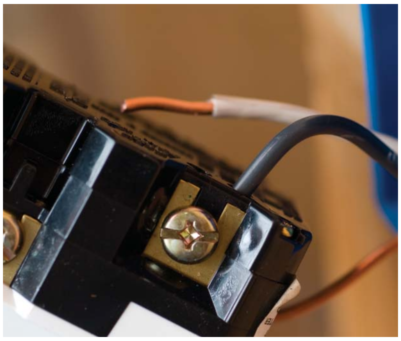




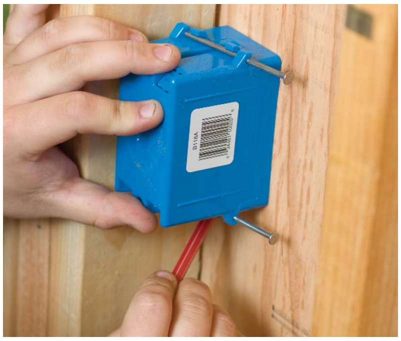
Bending the hook clockwise helps keep it in place when you tighten the screw.

Insert the remaining wires into their proper terminal holes (white to silver and black to gold) and tighten the screws to hold them in place.

We decided to make our light switch accessible from the outside



of the shed so we could turn on the lights regardless of the door we used, and so we could turn on an exterior floor light without going into the shed. We used the switch j-box as a template to mark the opening so we could cut it against the stud from inside the shed.



If you are experienced with a reciprocating saw you can make a plunge cut, but it's usually safer to drill a hole to get started.

Cutting from the back works well because the saw teeth are cutting on the return stroke, which helps prevent tear out.

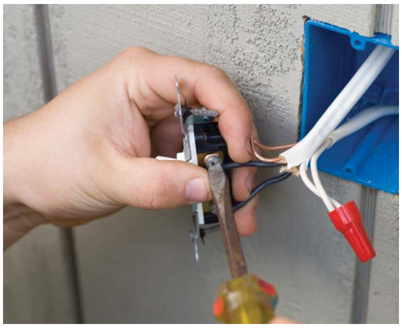
Because this j-box wasn't really designed for this application, we pre-drilled on the stud side of the box and fastened the box to the stud with screws.

We used a 3/4-inch spade bit to drill holes through the studs to route our wire from the GFCI outlet to the light switch.

We again attached the wire to the framing using wire staples.

We attached the light fixture j-boxes to the ceiling joists and ran wire from the left light to the light switch.

We connected the black wires and the ground to the light switch, and connected the white wires together inside the switch j-box using wire nuts.



We cut about an 8-inch section of romex and stripped the outer insulation so the individual strands could be used for pig tails to connect to the light fixture.

Three black wires are connected together at the first light j-box (feed, pigtail and the line to the next light in series). The same goes for the white wires. Remember, the power pigtail wire (black) goes to the brass/gold terminal on the light fixture, and the neutral pigtail wire (white) goes to the silver terminal.

Once you have the wiring finished, tuck the excess into the

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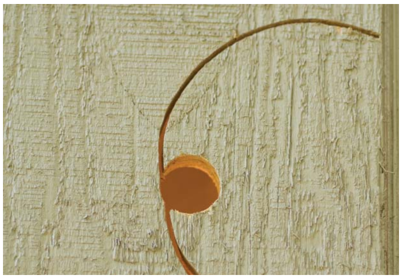
j-box and install the fixture. A drill is handy for this, especially when working on ceiling-mounted units.

Our final light fixture in the series was an exterior flood light. After marking the j-box location on the inside, we drilled partially through with a spade bit. Drill until the tip of the bit can be seen from outside.

To prevent blow-out (splintering the siding), finish drilling the hole from the outside.

We used a jig-saw to cut all of the circle we could from the inside. This gave us enough of the circle to finish marking and cutting the j-box opening from the outside.



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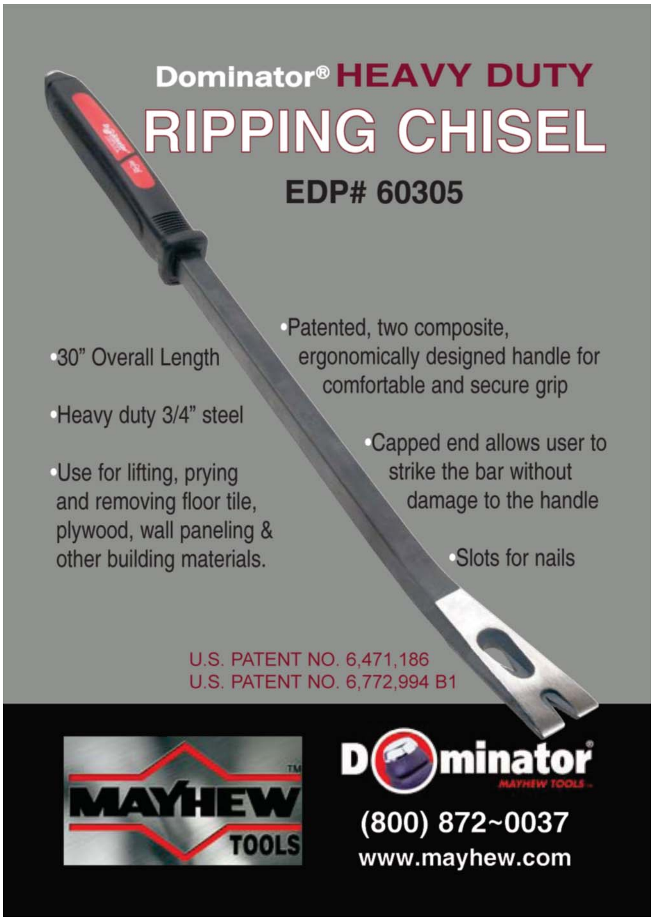

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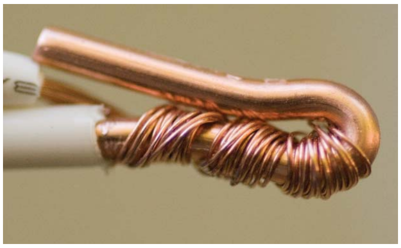
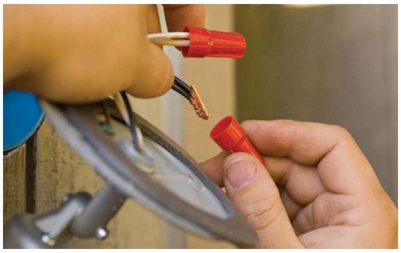
The wires on the floodlight fixture were multi-strand, so we wrapped them around the 12-gauge wire and bent the larger wire back over the multi-strands before covering the connection with a wire nut.

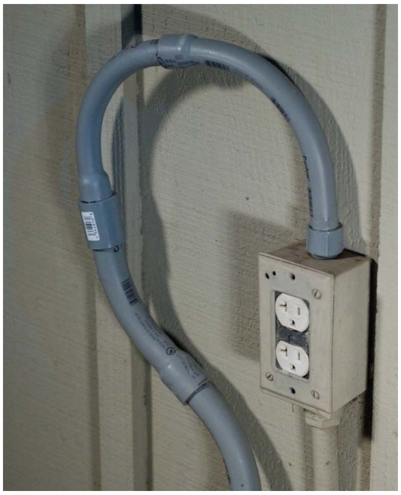




Remember to install the supplied weather seal gasket between the exterior fixture and the j-box.

Before connecting our new shed wiring to the house, we tested the circuit to make sure we had tripped the right breaker.

Finally, some creative conduit work allows us to use a pre-existing hole in our power source exterior j-box keeping everything properly sealed.



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THE GREAT

By Matt Weber

OUTDOORS

Photo courtesy Travis Industries

From backyard kitchens to outdoor entertainment centers, more homeowners are designing elaborate exterior living spaces that rival traditional living rooms.

The trend toward creating outdoor living environments is catching on like a pile of Match Light briquettes. Patio and deck construction is in high demand, and the barbecue industry is hotter than ever on the tail of a record-breaking year in 2007. Grill shipments exceeded 17.4 million in 2007—"The highest shipment numbers in more than 20 years," notes Leslie Wheeler, director of communications with the Hearth, Patio and Barbecue Association (HPBA). Demand is driven in large part by homeowners who plan to grill year-round in an outdoor retreat that rivals the traditional living room. Homeowners continue to remodel backyard patios and build exterior kitchens that make lounging in the fresh air a more enjoyable experience than ever.

Outdoor rooms are rapidly becoming an extension of the family quarters. According to the HPBA, the transition to the exterior living space is now being designed with wider doorways and large windows to tie the two environments together. Outdoor furniture now features fabrics that coordinate from inside to outside, mixing and matching solid colors and earth tones with a variety of textures and patterns.

At the forefront of the outdoor living trend is the baby boomer generation. The boomer crowd has the most disposable income of any other generation, and outdoor great rooms present an easy way to upgrade homes without having to move. In fact, builders are now including outdoor rooms in new home plans, as opposed to an optional interior room.

"By definition, an outdoor room is simply an outdoor area that homeowners can use for relaxing, cooking and entertaining," says best-selling garden and cookbook author, Katherine Whiteside, who I recently met at the HPBA Expo in Atlanta, Georgia. "By adding some furniture and propane appliances to an existing patio, garden or deck, you have the beginnings of a great outdoor room," says Whiteside.

ON WITH THE RETREAT

Creating an outdoor great room doesn't have to be a sudden, huge out-of-pocket expense. You can build your backyard retreat in a modular fashion, adding amenities as your budget allows. The first step is examining your property for functionality. Note the sun's location at different times during the day, and organize your patio layout according to your preferred exposure to shade and sunlight. Most people prefer areas with nice views of water, woods or a garden. And keep wind and drainage in mind. Proximity to the house is another concern. You want to minimize long journeys to the restroom, the fridge, etc.

Patios and decks make ideal outdoor rooms, with patios providing the greatest structural support for larger, heavier amenities.

Photo courtesy Summer Classics

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Include in your plan all the specifics regarding utilities. If your outdoor room requires a water supply, gas lines or electricity, then consider how those functions will tie into the house. And equip all outdoor outlets with a GFCI device (ground-fault circuit interruption).

Also, don't overlook the beauty of Mother Nature. Creating a living space near trees or streams can add a rustic ambience and invite birds and small animals to hang out with you and your guests. Always consider room for future expansion. You may opt to install a water garden or koi pond in the future, and you should plan ahead to allow room. Pergolas, gazebos, arbors and trellises are some other appealing structures you may consider in your overall design. Map out your plan to scale on graph paper to make sure you leave adequate space for expansion. You may eventually want to add a music system, overhead fan, infrared heater or even a flat-screen television.

When choosing amenities, begin with seating arrangements. Build your own from treated lumber, cedar, or sawn logs for a rustic appeal. Or, there are hundreds of patio sets to choose from, which range from a couple hundred dollars to several thousand. Patio furniture ranges in

Pergolas, arbors and trellises enhance the outdoor space and make great DIY projects. Photo courtesy Outdoor Living Today

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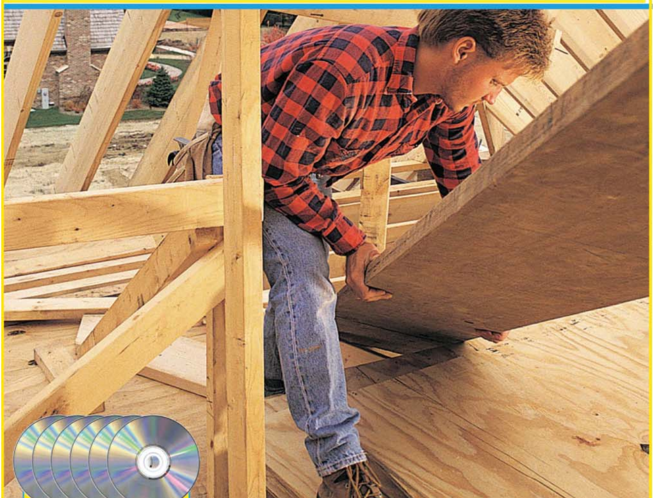

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design from a basic picnic table to elaborate table-and-chair sets with cutting edge décor and modern amenities, such as a solar-powered patio umbrella with LED lights that run at night on power absorbed during the day.

The next step in planning is to determine your support surface. A patio is ideal because it has plenty of strength and stability to carry the weight of virtually any structure or appliance you choose to add. Choose the natural look of stone flooring, the classic look of concrete pavers or even a decorative concrete surface. Whether you choose a rigid mortared patio or one with a flexible base of crushed rock or sand, creating a patio also makes a great do-it-yourself project for the handy homeowner.

Another option is decking, where you can choose from treated lumber, western red cedar,

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cypress, redwood, and even exotic species, like ipe and tigerwood. You also have the option of low-maintenance composite decking, as well as aluminum and even stone-decking systems. However, it should be noted that decks have only enough strength and stability to support the most basic of appliances. In other words, a deck will support a grill, but if you plan to include counters, hearths or other heavy items, then a deck will likely require additional structural support to accommodate them.

FIRE IS COOL

The most popular outdoor amenity is a grill, the center of the backyard's culinary and social activities. Whether you're partial to burgers and hotdogs or gourmet roasts, backyard barbecues are what make summer so special. You get all the food and fun of a tailgate party without having to tolerate the traffic. According to the Propane Education and Research Council, almost two-thirds (63 percent) of parents say barbecuing or grilling outdoors is the most enjoyable way for their family to eat dinner during the summer months. Less than half (28 percent) as many say the same about sitting down for a home-cooked meal.

Makes and models of grills range from inexpensive portable charcoal burners to elaborate propane-fueled setups with griddles and skillets and accessory refrigerators. Available features include attachable sushi bars, portable woks and advanced control tools, such as the grill-surface temperature indicating when to flip and serve the food.

Another high-demand item is a heat source, which helps ensure your new backyard lounge will get the most usage throughout the year. Portable space heaters are an easy-to-store option. Some contemporary space heaters are configured as towers with a mushroom design to direct heat downward to tables and chairs. Other heaters double as bistro tables or lamps to blend décor with functionality. For a more rustic appeal, choose from easy-to-tote fire pits, chimineas or cast-iron stoves to beautiful stucco or river rock gas-fired hearths. Let's face it, a blazing full stone hearth serving as the focal point of your backyard is sure to make your neighbors jealous.

And don't overlook the importance of adequate lighting. Hearths and fire pits provide a warm outdoorsy glow, but a couple of French lanterns can offer a more elegant and romantic setting. You can add candles

Gazebos are often available in kits to ease the building process for DIY'ers. Photo courtesy Outdoor Living Today

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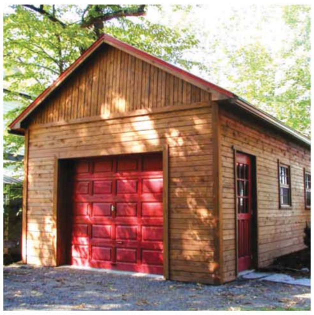

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THE GREEN OUTDOORS

In an era of heightened environmental consciousness, it's only natural that homeowners who spend more time outdoors want to keep those outdoors clean and healthy. When 60 million people hit the barbecue at once—like they do on Fourth of July—the environmental impacts can add up quickly. You have options when heating and grilling. On one hand, wood-burning stoves and charcoal barbecue grills use an easily renewable source of fuel: trees. On the other hand, wood-burners emit carbon into the atmosphere, which contributes to poorer air quality. But on the third hand, many people simply find the smoky taste of charcoal barbecuing just too delicious to resist (count me guilty as charged). If you do use charcoal, look for lump brands, which contain less coal dust or other additives that are used as binders in the briquettes. Besides, lump charcoal burns better and results in better tasting food than the cheap stuff.

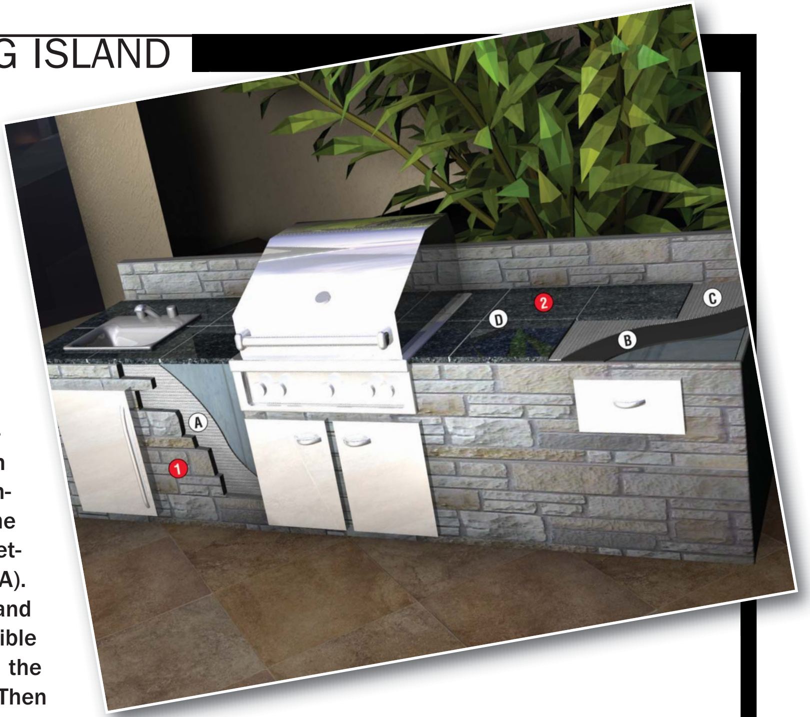
For a "greener" approach to air quality, propane and electric hearths and grills contribute less

The barbecue grill is often the focal point of not only cooking, but also socializing. Photo courtesy Outdoor Kitchen World

BUILD YOUR OWN COOKING ISLAND

You can save thousands of dollars in labor on your outdoor great room by building it yourself. From basic deck construction to hand-laid paver patios, outdoor rooms make great DIY additions that can be broken into a series of weekend projects. Begin as simply as building a picnic table, or dive head-first into an elaborate outdoor kitchen addition.

Even high-end stone cooking islands are not beyond the realm of the serious DIY'er when the right tools, materials and instructions are at hand. For example, MAPEI offers a variety of mortars and adhesives to construct a Jerusalem stone-veneered island (1) with a granite tile countertop (2). For installing the wall tile you'll need the company's Granirapid product, which is a fast-setting, flexible, polymer-modified mortar system (A). For the countertop, begin with fiberglass mesh and Mapelastic 315 (B), which serves as a flexible cement-based waterproofer. Follow that with the Kerabond mortar system (C) to adhere the tile. Then fill the joints with MAPEI's Opticolor grout (D) for a stain-free, easy-to-clean food prep surface. For more information, visit, www.mapei.com.



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carbon directly to the environment. Additionally, some residences may be restricted from open-flame grilling, either by code or by homeowner associations, in which case a powerful electric grill will be a smart, “green” option.

But as far as cooking efficiency, propane wins the race. Propane offers instant gas flames with no wait time for burners to heat up. Gas cooking offers greater control with precise temperature and even heat distribution. In fact, according to the American Gas Association, 97 percent of professional chefs prefer cooking with gas. And, the U.S. Department of Energy estimates propane fireplaces cost 30 to 60 percent less per hour to operate than wood-burning fireplaces. (Of course, this assumes you aren’t chopping your own wood.)

So, whether you’re creating a backyard kitchen, a gathering place for family and friends, or a quiet place to read and write, the design options are endless. An outdoor room is a fun and rewarding project where you can start small, and grow it as you gos. So think big, plan ahead and have fun out there. **EHT**

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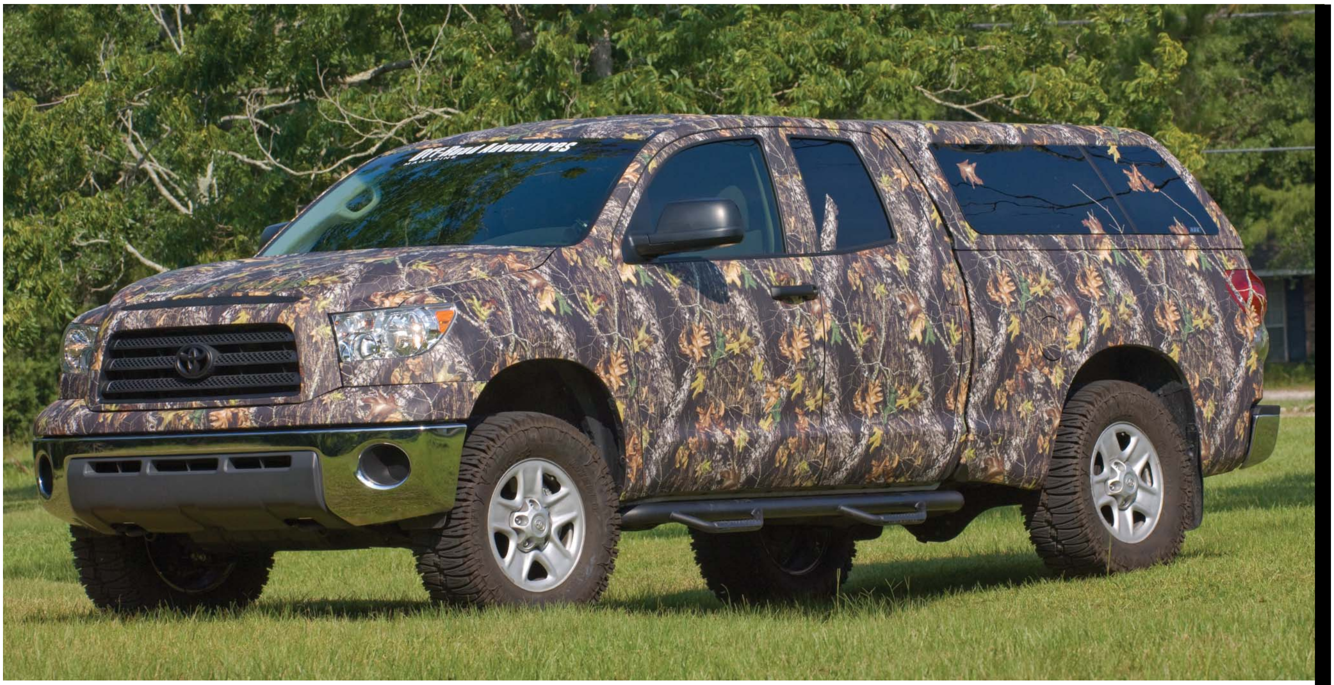

By Larry Walton, Photos by Bruce W. Smith

It's a good thing I had a keyless entry remote for our project truck. I wouldn't have found it without the flashing lights, with it being all camoed up and all. Tell you what, the full vinyl wrap finish on this truck turns heads wherever it goes.

The advantages of a vinyl wrap finish are many. The body and paint don't have to be perfect, detailed graphics and patterns are available, and it can be removed at anytime you change your mind and want to go back to the stock color.

The key to making this technology work is the self-adhesive vinyl material, which can be printed with very detailed artwork. The vinyl that Camoclad used to wrap our project truck was a 4-mil film made by 3M called Controltac Graphic Film. Air release channels keep it bubble-free, and it can be slid and repositioned. The pressure activated, built-in Comply™ adhesive is released from tiny pockets with a squeegee once the material is positioned.

"A camo kit for a full-size SUV or a pickup with a bed shell runs about $1,000," says Joe Warner, president of Camoclad Inc. Do-it-yourself and labor savings can be pretty significant. Professional installation starts at about $1,500 and can go as high as $3,500 depending on vehicle size, the extent of the details to be wrapped (racks, bumpers, mirrors, etc.) and touches like pattern cut-outs on the glass.

Pro installer Richard Trahan of Advanced Sign & Graphics gave us some great tips. He started the install on our project truck by removing the badging using 60-pound test braided fishing line, but Trahan said he often uses a heat gun to loosen the glue and remove the badging. However, care must be taken not to overheat and damage the paint.

With the emblems removed, Trahan stripped the remaining adhesive with an automotive eraser wheel mounted on a cordless drill. He also recommends wiping down the entire vehicle with a prep solvent to remove anything that may interfere with the vinyl adhesives.

With the painted surfaces of the vehicle prepared, here's what it takes to wrap up the wrap-up.

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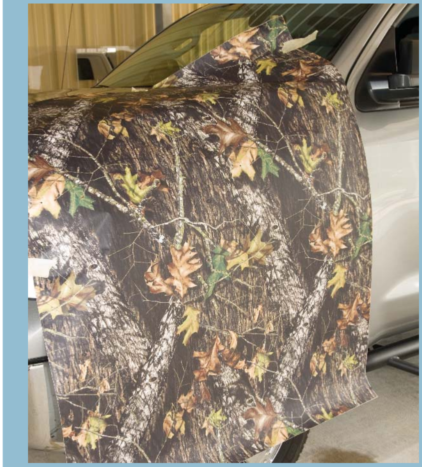
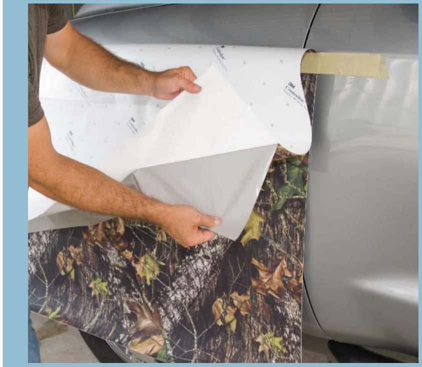
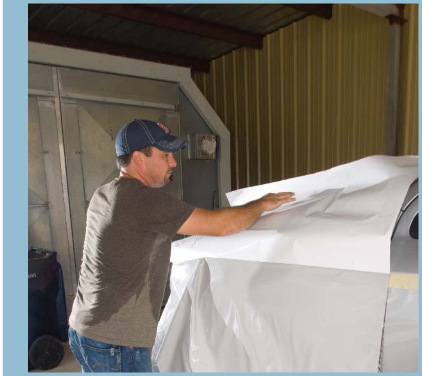
STEP-BY-STEP



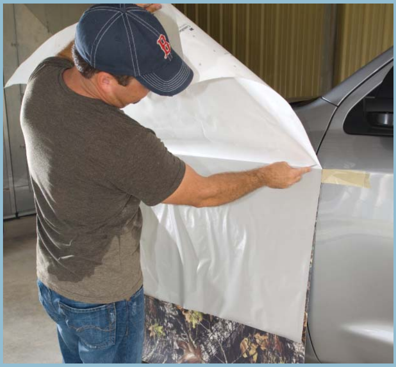
Position a full sheet of vinyl so it extends to the edge of a body panel and tack it in place with masking tape.



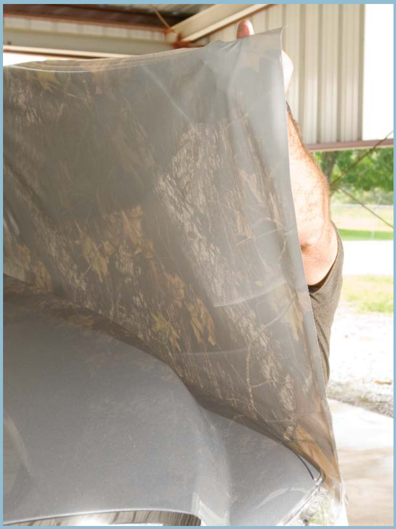
Secure a temporary fold point with masking tape and let the upper portion fold and drape back over the lower so the finish sides are face to face.



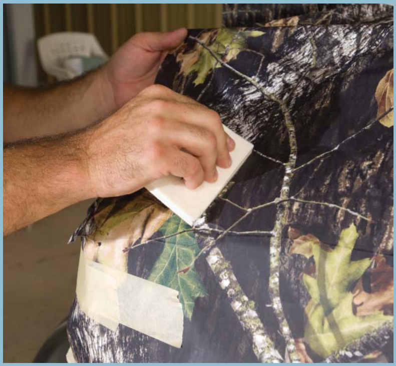
Peel the backing off the upper portion down to the fold.



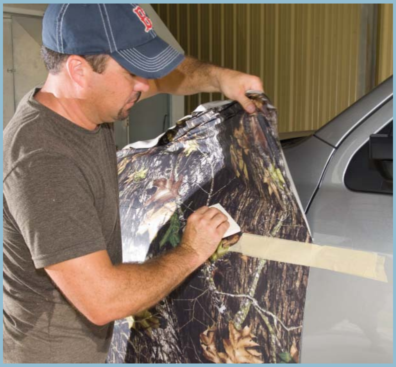
Trim the backing off just above the fold.



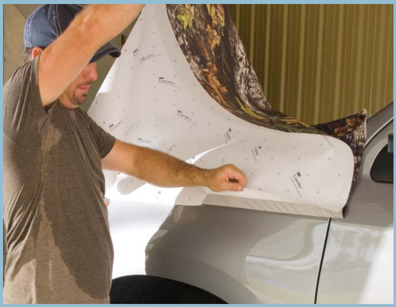
Lift the exposed section above the fold and lay it over the area to be covered.



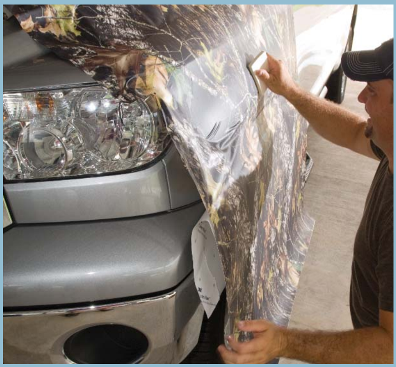
Begin smoothing the vinyl onto the vehicle just above the fold and work upward using a felt squeegee.



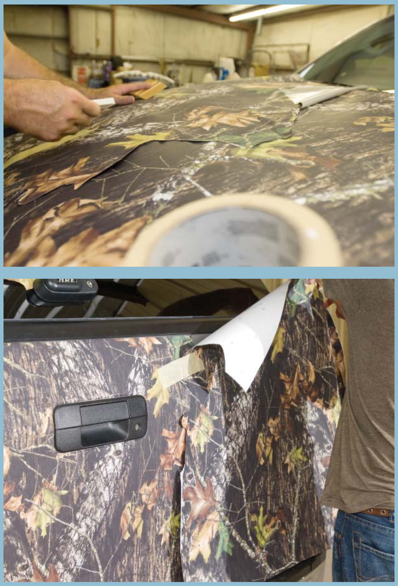
Pull the vinyl back off the vehicle as needed to remove wrinkles and air pockets as you smooth it onto the vehicle surface.



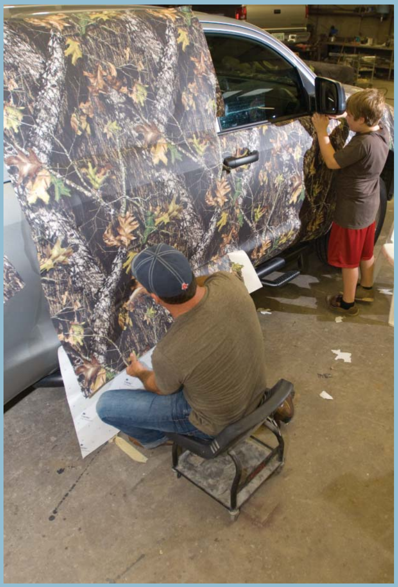
Lift the bottom portion of the vinyl to reach the point where the backing is still in place. Start peeling it downward to expose the adhesive side just below the fold line.



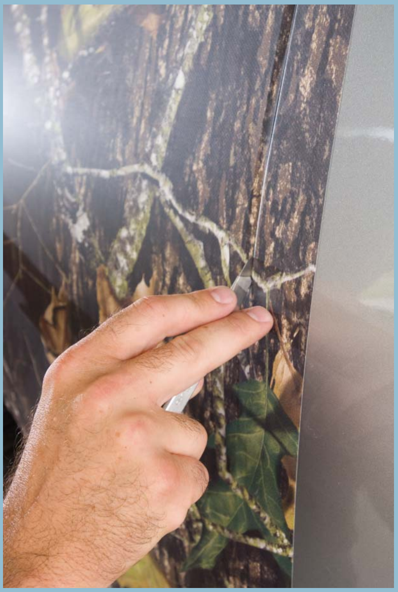
Start smoothing the lower portion of the sheet onto the vehicle surface from the fold downward. Note how the backing paper is only partially removed to keep the adhesive surface clean and off of the vehicle.



Cut around elements in the pattern and overlap on areas too large for one sheet, such as the hood and the tailgate.



You can bridge over gaps between body panels to keep the pattern flowing, but cut the material so it ends at the panel edges.



Cut along the body panel by inserting the knife blade in the seam between the door and body panel.

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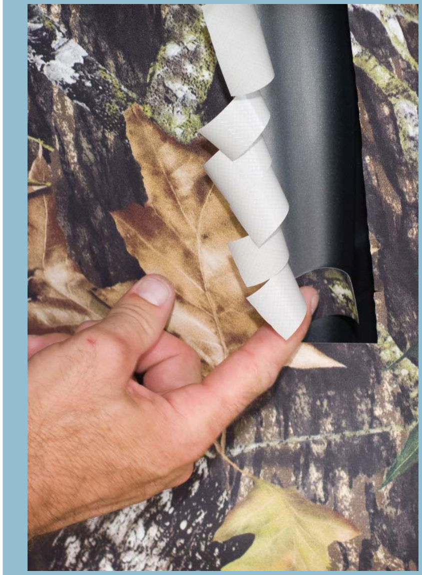
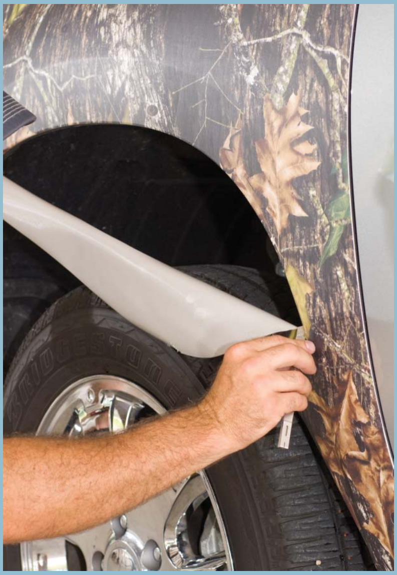
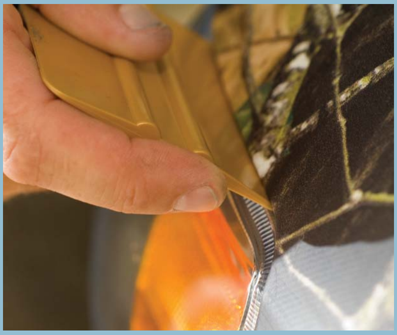


Make several horizontal cuts in the gap between the cab and pickup bed so the vinyl will wrap without wrinkling.



Trim along the fender openings by extending the knife blade into the opening.



Use the more rigid, nylon squeegee to tuck edges, and also over the entire surface to release and activate the adhesive. **EHT**

VINYL WRAP QUICK TIPS:

- Install only on a factory paint job if you plan to remove it later.
- Properly prepare the paint.
- Avoid direct sun and hot temperatures during install.
- On the vehicle, start at the bottom and work up, but on each individual sheet, start at the top and work down.
- Avoid wrapping the vinyl around the relatively sharp edges of doors or body panels where it won't stay flat.
- Use a stainless steel or snap-off style knife to keep a very sharp edge.

MATERIALS:

- Braided 60-lb. fish line, heat gun or blow dryer
- Eraser wheel
- Prep solvent
- Vinyl install squeegees
- Masking tape
- Razor knife

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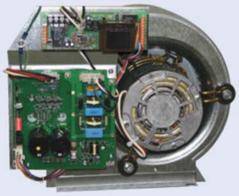

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CATSPAW LIGHTED PEN TOOL

Touted as "the vehicle inspector's new best friend," the CatsPaw Lighted Pen Pick-Up Tool combines the ability to extend, light up, pick up and write reports. The back end features an LED light that will illuminate those difficult-to-see dark areas—plus, it has a magnet with over 2 pounds of pulling power. Then, flip it over and take notes with the pen end. The pen is 6-3/4 inches when closed and will extend to 20-1/2 inches for long reach. Batteries are included, and CatsPaw replacement batteries and pen refills are available. To learn more, visit Mayhew Tools at www.mayhew.com or call 1-800-872-0037.

UNIVERSAL TOOL BATTERY CHARGER

Like computers, cordless tools were meant to make our lives simpler. In some ways they did, but like computers they brought along their own new set of issues. Different manufacturers used different charging systems and even when using the same brands, consumers were faced with using different chargers for different tools. Shortened battery life cycles made tools worthless when the batteries would no longer hold a charge, and as the batteries aged, the cycle time between charges became shorter.

10c Technologies, a Texas-based electronics company has addressed these issues, simplifying matters for cordless tool users with its line of chargers that conditions batteries when charging them. The charger also has adapters to fit a variety of manufacturers' products. *Extreme How-To* has been using 10cTech's Crew model that can charge four batteries simultaneously, and our staff found the charger to be a nice addition during our projects. Battery charge times are shorter with the 10cTech compared to the OEM recharging stations that came with the tools.

We also tried bringing dead batteries back to life with the Crew model. *EHT* borrowed a box of dead batteries from the local high school—12- and 14-volt batteries that were no longer able to be recharged using the OEM chargers. We were able to revive 50 percent of those batteries, which made the school happy as now they are able to use those tools again. Some of the batteries we received had physical damage, and the sensors built into the 10c Technologies charger signaled those units as bad and stopped the charging cycle on those units.

10C
CREW
1 2 3 4

We liked the charger's ability to charge four batteries at once, a very handy feature if you have a work crew. Furthermore, the ability of the charger to fully charge batteries quicker than OEM chargers will reduce work stoppages resulting from dead batteries. 10c Technologies offers models that are powered by 120 volts, and also a 12-volt model. There are models that charge four batteries at once, or a model for one battery. For more information, visit www.10cTech.com or call (972) 385-2486.

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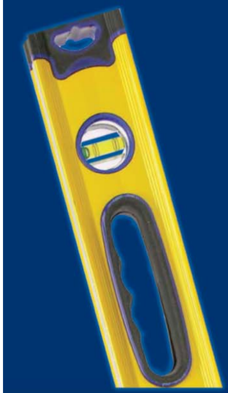
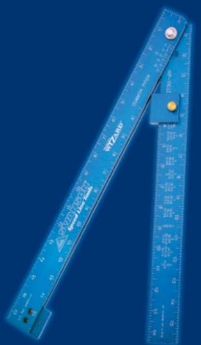
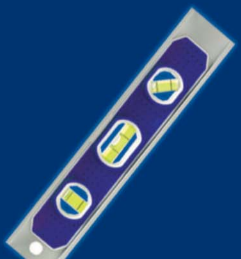


LEVELS



FOLDING SQUARES



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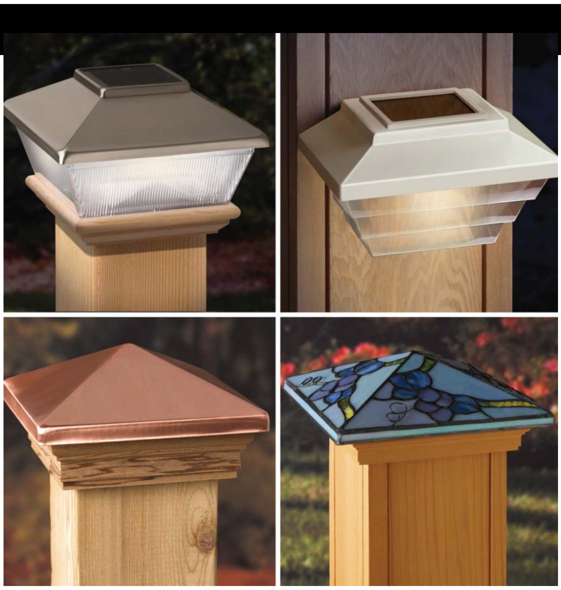

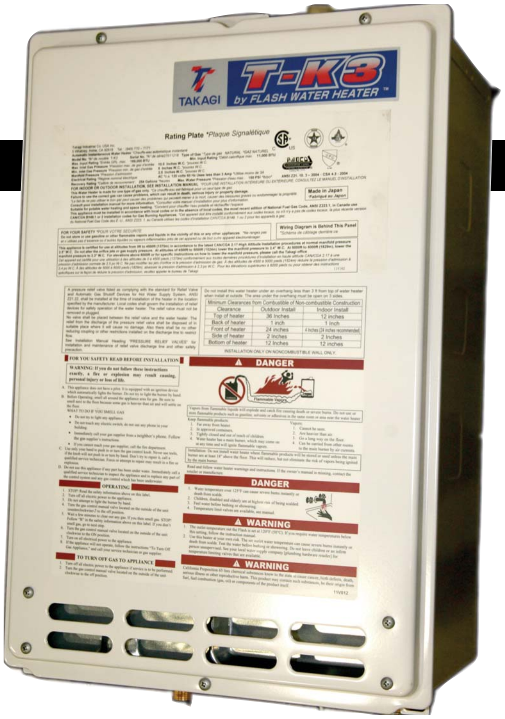

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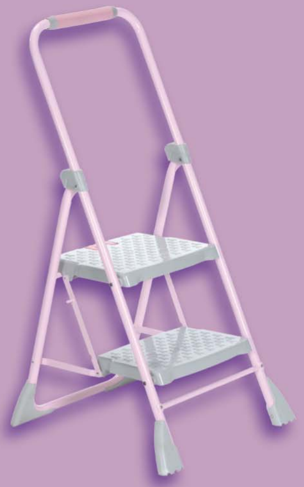

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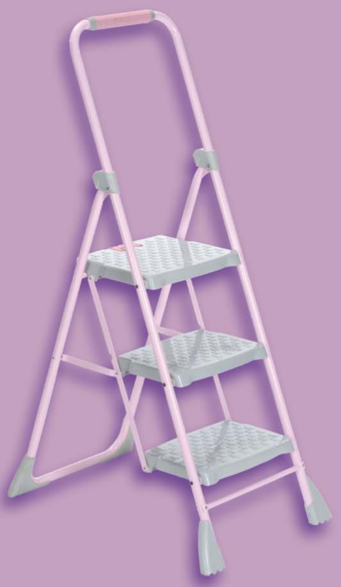

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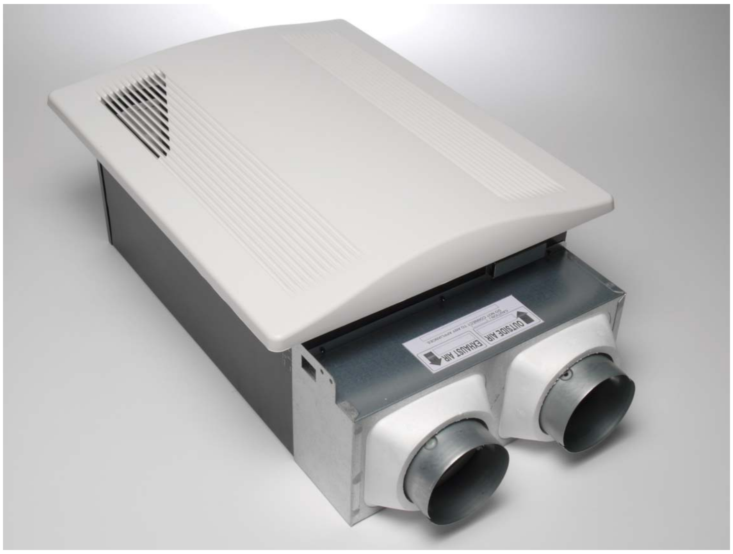

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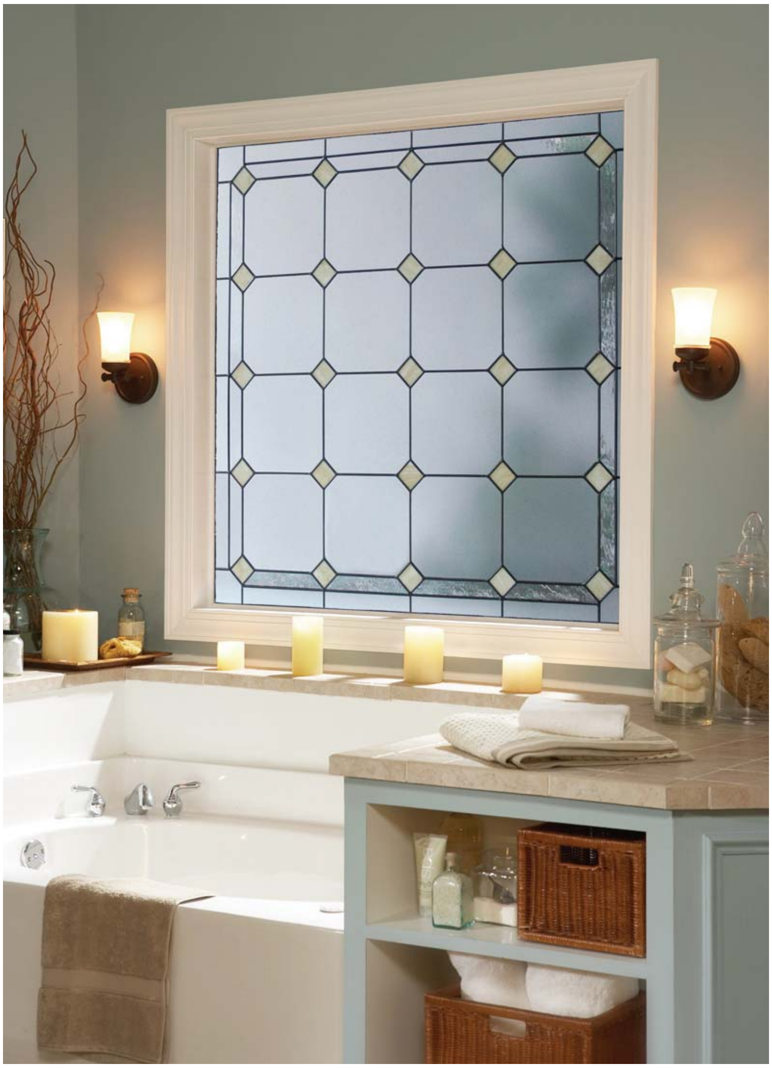

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